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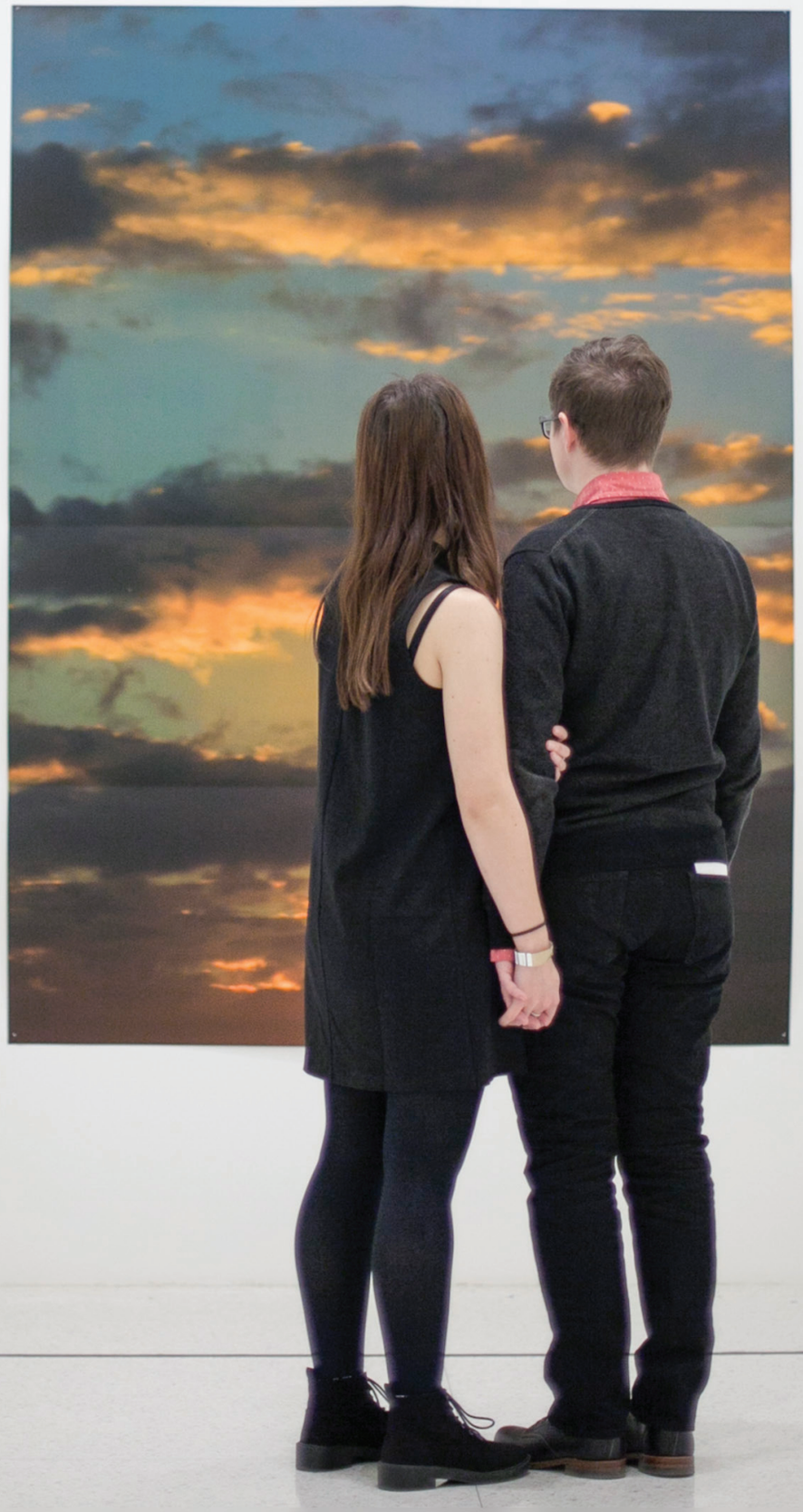

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These days you can't swing a cat meme without hitting three comments or social media posts that declare something or someone the stupidest, the most offensive, the lamest. The worst.

It's better, and a lot more fun, to turn toward the positive and spend our time debating who or what in our world is deserving of our love. The smartest, the most innovative, the most talented. The best.

In this spirit, we humbly submit the Best of the Twin Cities in the realms of art, music, sports, culture, food, and drink.

On our side, City Pages staffers and freelancers scoured their memories and the metro to compile the best people, places, and things that we think are deserving of your attention and patronage during these next 12 months.

On yours, we asked for submissions and votes on readers' polls to name the popular picks in those same categories. You answered, and we're happy to list the popular vote choices alongside our own.

Some of this year's winners are standout rookies that burst onto the local scene and instantly captivated us. Others reintroduce veterans, standbys who've found new ways of doing things or whose old methods simply refuse to go out of style. All are a testament to why life in the Twin Cities is the best. ★

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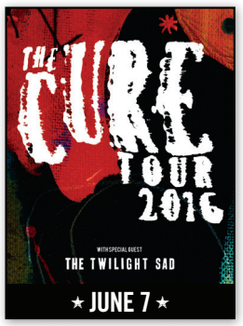

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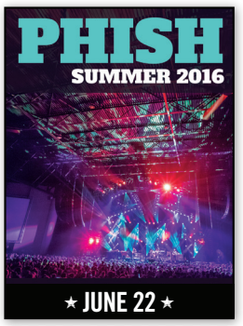

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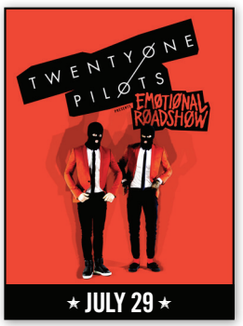

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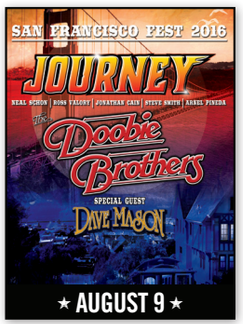

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Best All-Ages Venue: The Cedar Cultural Center

Best Art Gallery: The Soap Factory

Best Bar Game: Trivia by Trivia Mafia

Best Casino: Mystic Lake

Best Comedy Club: Acme Comedy Co.

Best Comedy Open Mic: Acme Comedy Co.

Best Concert of the Past 12 Months: Rock the Garden

Best Concert of the Past 12 Months (Touring): Alabama Shakes

Best Concert Venue: First Avenue

Best Dance Club: First Avenue

Best Dance Night: Transmission

Best Fashion Show: I AM MPLS!

Best Festival (Summer): Twin Cities Pride

Best Festival (Winter): St. Paul Winter Carnival

Best Hip-Hop Artist: Lizzo

Best Instagram: @eatdrinkdishmpls

Best Jukebox: Grumpy's NE

Best Karaoke: Vegas Lounge

Best Local Fashion Designer: Samantha Rei

Best Local Record Label: Rhymesayers Entertainment

Best Local Standup Comic: Tiffany Norton

Best Movie Theater: Riverview Theater

Best Museum: Minneapolis Institute of Art

Best Music Festival: Rock the Garden

Best New Band: Hippo Campus

Best R&B Artist: Prince

Best Radio Personality: Mary Lucia

Best Radio Station: 89.3 the Current

Best Record Store Day Location: Electric Fetus

Best Strip Club: The Seville Club

Best Theater: Guthrie Theater

Best TV Newscaster: Amelia Santaniello

Best TV Station: KARE-TV (Channel 11)

Best Vocalist (female): Dessa

Best Vocalist (male): Prince

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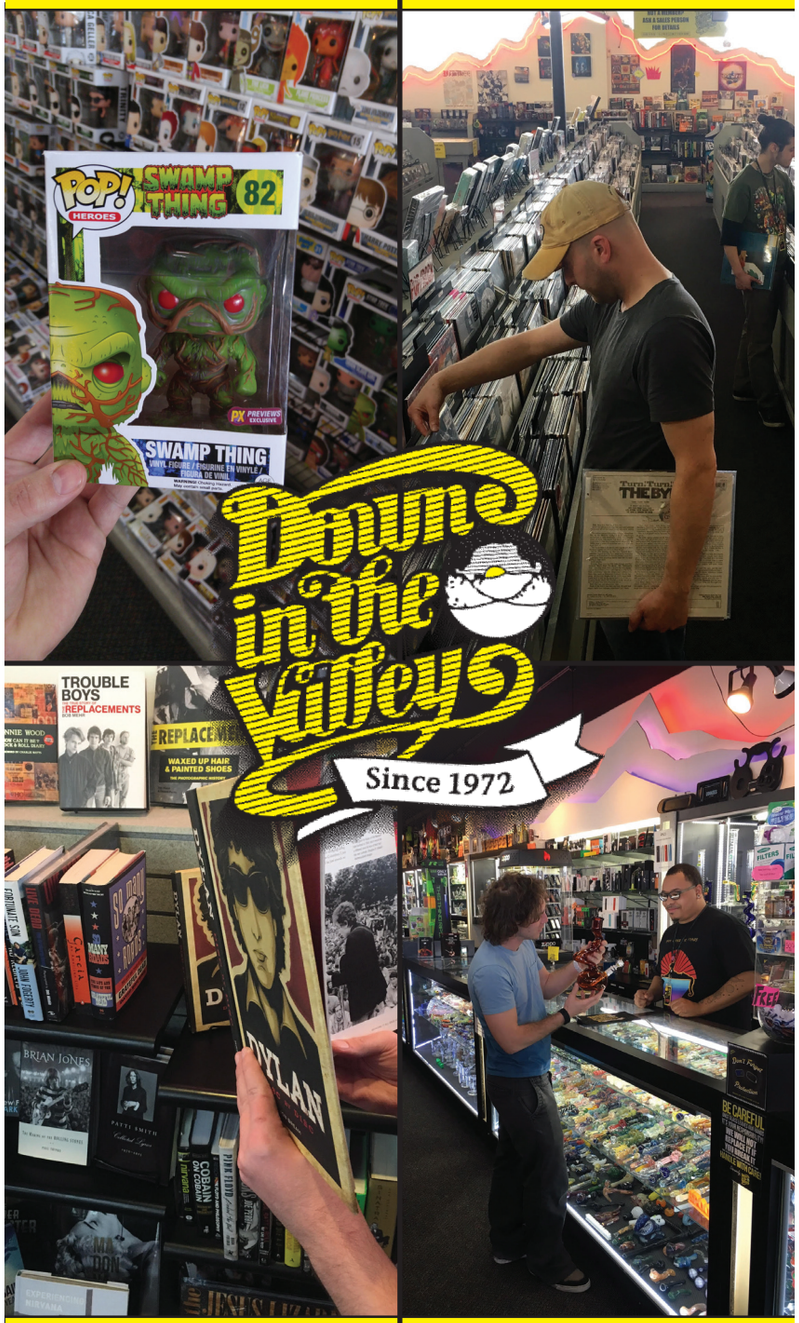

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Best Food Truck: Smack Shack

Best Fried Chicken: Revival

Best Fries: Five Guys Burgers and Fries

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Best Ice Cream: Izzy's

Best Italian: Cossetta Alimentari

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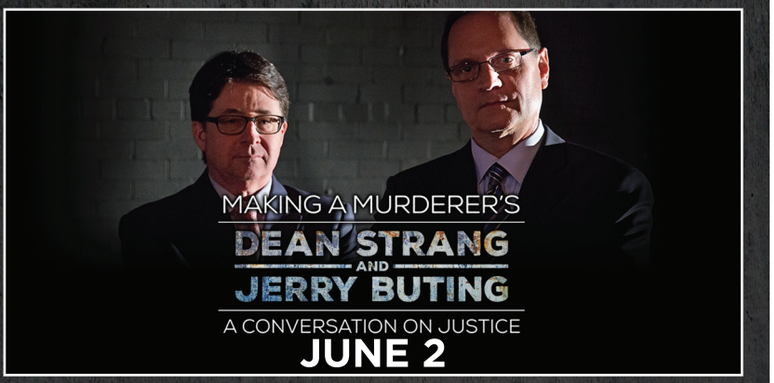

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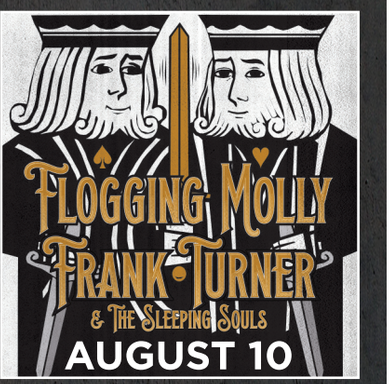

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BEST ALL-AGES VENUE

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www.thegaragemn.com

There isn't an all-ages venue in the Twin Cities that gives as much opportunity to young musicians as suburban community center the Garage. Beyond hosting a mix of local and national acts multiple times throughout the week, the Garage offers internship and volunteer positions. Participants can help around the venue, become a member of the street team and advisory board, and work for the youth-run publication Garage Music News. In spring of 2015, the Garage reopened with a new recording studio, new bathrooms, and a café. The venue surely isn't sexy, but that's kind of the point. It's basically a clubhouse for angsty teens — like a First Ave Jr. In the past year, the Garage has put on shows from seasoned artists like Modern Baseball, All Time Low, and Jeff Rosenstock, proving it's not just a performance space for unpracticed local Blink-182 cover bands. No other well-established venue is this unapologetically all-ages, all the time.

Readers' Choice: The Cedar Cultural Center

BEST CONCERT VENUE

First Avenue

701 FIRST AVE. N.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-338-8388

www.first-avenue.com

Following a harrowing ceiling collapse in August during a performance by Theory of a Deadman, First Avenue had to shutter its doors for a few weeks, quickly relocate as many shows as it could, and do some necessary remodeling to bring the venerable old bus station back up to code. And in handling the difficult situation so professionally and efficiently — with minimal injuries, little fuss, and an organized plan in place — the jewel of the Twin Cities rock 'n' roll scene proved once again why it is one of the best clubs in the world. The changes are slight and mostly cosmetic, with the recent renovation having raised the ceiling up a few feet. With recent upgrades to the lighting rigs, the sound system, and now the ceiling itself, First Avenue seems poised to be the proud musical focal point of the Twin Cities for plenty more years to come.

Readers' Choice: First Avenue

BEST VENUE NAME

The Venue

315 FIRST AVE. N.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-200-9987

www.facebook.com/thevenuempls

After months spent combing the Twin Cities' finest venues for inspiration, City Pages is proud to name the Venue as the venue with the Best Venue Name. It's a winner because it's minimalistic. Simple. Chic. Classy. And it's also the club where Li'l Wayne pulled a no-show after members of his entourage refused to be searched by the Venue's security. After Wayne's June 2015 stunt, the Venue's Facebook page promptly changed its profile image to a shot of the exterior and then proceeded to remain inactive until February 2016, when it returned to Facebook to announce a 2 Chainz show. Apparently, things have been going smoothly ever since at the generically titled music hall, but with a name like the Venue, you'd expect nothing less.

BEST DANCE CLUB

Honey

205 E. HENNEPIN AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-746-0306

www.honeympls.com

Everyone knows that the pinnacle of dance clubs is that blood rave featured in the 1998 vampire flick *Blade*. Unfortunately, you're liable to piss off the health department with that level of carnage, but luckily northeast Minneapolis dance crypt Honey has everything aside from the human plasma and murder. The sequestered basement setting unlocks an almost primal instinct to dance, feeling like an otherworldly cellar where sweat is ambrosia and inhibitions are illegal. Honey's recurring '90s nights make it the place for the nostalgia-stricken 9-5er to indulge in some corny-ass R&B without fear of being judged for their shameless hand dancing.

Readers' Choice: First Avenue

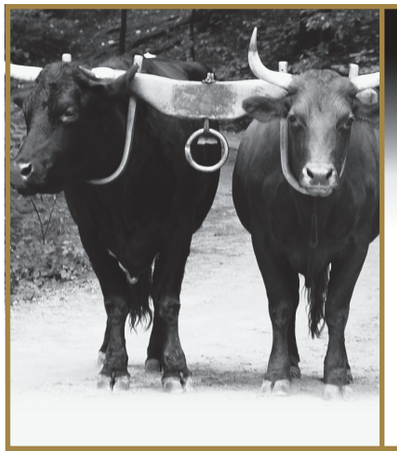
BEST DANCE NIGHT

Grrrl Scout at the Nomad World Pub

501 CEDAR AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-338-6424

www.nomadpub.com

Going out dancing isn't fun if you're constantly anxious about creeps invading your personal space. Grrrl Scout, the queer



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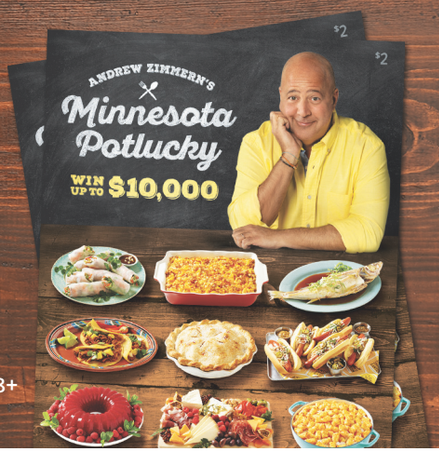


MINNESOTA LOTTERY

Must be 18+

dance night every second Saturday at the Nomad World Pub, bypasses that crowd all together. The underlying theme of Grrrl Scout is that consent is not only cool, it's mandatory. DJs Girl Named Jane and Troop 612 bring the heat along with giant games of Jenga and bonfires on the Nomad's outdoor patio, when the weather permits. Founded in 2013, Grrrl Scout also puts on its annual Pride event, Summer Camp, at the Cabooze; the Mess Hall queer music series at the Triple Rock Social Club; and burlesque event Drop Dead Gorgeous: A Queer Carnivale in Hell at Hell's Kitchen. To top it all off, Grrrl Scout has an exclusive drink special: the Grrrl Scout Cookie, a Thin Mint-based cocktail.

Readers' Choice: Transmission

BEST CLUB DJ

Mike Gervais

701 FIRST AVE. N.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-338-8388

www.first-avenue.com

From a technical standpoint, Mike Gervais' behind-the-deck chops are as good as anyone's in town. But the best DJs are more than DJs — they're party cultivators. Gervais has been a local techno force for years, but 2015 saw his monthly System party hitting its stride. After a stint at the BoltUnderground, the Twin Cities' best above-ground techno night returned to First Avenue's Record Room where its bloodline began. Gervais brings in extra sound, boosting the driving beats with added audiophile muscle. Sadly, System's impressive run was interrupted by First Ave's ceiling collapse last August, which shuttered the Record Room. But Gervais emerged in December to toast System's fifth anniversary with London techno stud Ben Sims and perform with House Proud pals at Honey. Here's hoping for a speedy return to System's monthly glory.

BEST OPEN MIC

Fifth Element

2411 HENNEPIN AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-377-0044

www.fifthelementonline.com

When Fifth Element relaunched its open mic six years ago, there was much excitement, as the Rhymesayers HQ has famously drawn huge crowds for upstart rhymers to play to. Held every first Thursday of the month, the open mic continues to be a viable launching pad for artists looking to break into the already crowded Twin Cities hip-hop scene. With so many hopefuls in the state, it's a huge opportunity for a beginner to perform on the same stage that Aesop Rock, P.O.S, and Prof have all performed on and get exposure that's typically reserved for established acts. Though it's never received the recognition it deserves as the premier open mic spot in town (most likely due to the genre-exclusive format), Fifth Element gets the nod this year for continuing to uphold the quality standard Rhymesayers has set and helping to introduce jittery neophytes to an audience that's always hungry for new hip-hop.

BEST JAZZ CLUB

Vieux Carré

408 ST. PETER ST.
ST. PAUL
651-291-2715

www.vieux-carre.com

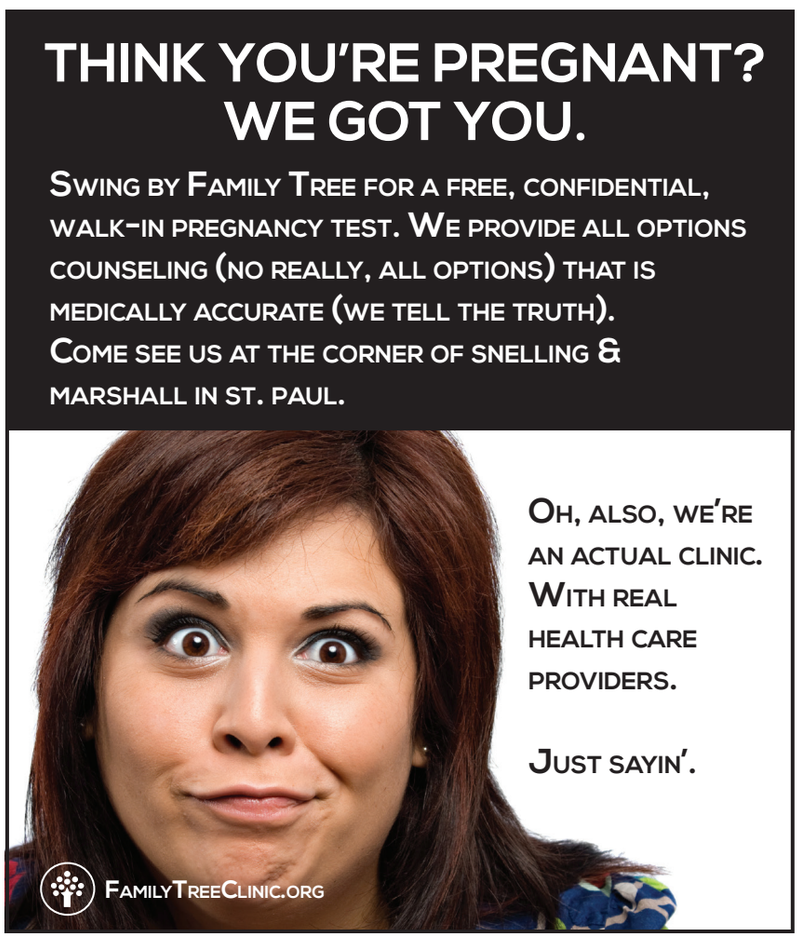
Tears ran improv routes down the faces of Twin Cities jazz fans when longtime venue Artists' Quarter shuttered in late 2013. A spiritual successor officially emerged last July, however, when the Dakota Jazz Club restored jazz to AQ's former basement space in downtown St. Paul with Vieux Carré (pronounced "view kar-ay"). The NOLA-flavored, speakeasy-styled music den has brought stellar cocktails, creole cooking, and, of course, a top-notch rotation of jazz artists to the historic Hamm Building. While its sister space the Dakota bills bigger names across the river, Vieux Carré keeps things sophisticated and cool with its emphasis on local talent and French Quarter vibes. Its welcome presence ensures the Saintly City Cat Show isn't St. Paul's only gathering space for cool cats.

BEST JUKEBOX

19 Bar

19 W. 15TH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-5553

A recent City Pages cover story arrived at a grim conclusion: The jukebox is dead. Well, it's mostly dead, and the culprit is TouchTunes, those soulless and ubiquitous internet-powered machines that dominate bar scenes worldwide. There are a few holdouts, however, and 19 Bar is among those still paying upkeep costs on the classic jukebox. The treasured Twin Cities gay bar keeps its juke stocked with surplus personality, as longtime bartender Andrew Beirl lovingly burns/loads mix CDs into the neon antiquity. Among



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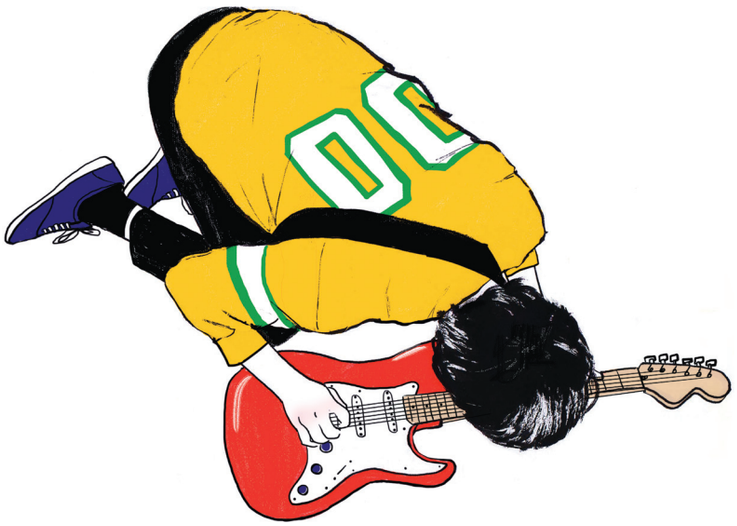

the handpicked cuts: Britney Spears, Janet Jackson, 4 Non Blondes, Kesha, the Eurythmics, and other favorites of the Loring Park barroom. The 19 Bar's jukebox may not be steeped in the same lore as the CC Club's, but even the latter tavern gave in to TouchTunes, so major props to the 19 Bar for keeping its musical character alive.

Readers' Choice: Grumpy's NE

BEST JAZZ ARTIST

JT Bates

www.totallygrossnationalproduct.com

Drummer JT Bates has been an integral and highly influential member of the Twin Cities music scene since the late '90s. After founding the experimental Fat Kid Wednesdays jazz night at the Turf Club's Clown Lounge, Bates has sat behind the kit for some of the area's best and most inventive bands, including Alpha Consumer, Marijuana Deathsquads, Andrew Bird, Coloring Time, and Dead Man Winter. In addition, he keeps the free-form Clown Lounge legacy alive with the weekly JT's Jazz Implosion residency at Icehouse. Bates finally took his many talents front and center this past year with the release of his debut solo album, *Open Relationships*. The innovative, genre-bending record was released on avant-garde local label Totally Gross National Product, and features dynamic collaborations between Bates and sonic alchemist Mark McGee, guitarist Jeremy Ylvisaker, and producer extraordinaire BJ Burton. But it is Bates' vibrant compositions and bold rhythms that carry these tunes to a unique place.

BEST ROCK BAND

Strange Relations

www.strangerelations.bandcamp.com

Strange Relations' brilliant debut LP, *-CENTRISM*, stood boldly apart from the rest of the Twin Cities rock scene, with an artful blend of post-punk adventurousness, heartfelt anthems, and lo-fi charms. The studied, assured batch of songs — along with an equally potent live show — delivered a welcome jolt to the scene, as well as serving notice that the creative stakes have been raised. The trio — composed of drummer/vocalist Casey Sowa, bassist/synths Marisa Helgeson, and guitarist Nate Hart-Anderson — has crafted a taut set of unguarded, minimalist jams that resonate emotionally, physically, and cerebrally with the listener. They also manage to deftly switch up the tone, tempo, and style from one song to the next while still managing to sound cohesive. *-CENTRISM* showcases Strange Relations' wide-ranging talents and their ability to challenge themselves musically, leaving fans of the inventive band anxious to hear what's next.

BEST LIVE ARTIST

The Blind Shake

www.theblindshake.com

Anyone who has witnessed a live performance by the Blind Shake can attest to their potency. The thunderous garage-punk trio is composed of brothers Jim and Mike Blaha and their cousin Dave Roper on drums, and every set they play has a raw urgency that's impossible to resist. Their guitar-fueled jams are vigorous and massive, with enough catchy riffs and unshakeable rhythms to

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make you forget any other rock bands exist at that moment. Rather than stay boxed in by one particular style or sound, the group continue to challenge themselves with each rapid-fire new release. They even recorded a sprightly surf-rock album with Swami John Reis of Rocket from the Crypt fame. That surprising and ultimately successful 2015 collaboration brought some buoyancy and levity to the Blind Shake's typically relentless sound, and Reis' sonic influence even carried over to their next LP, *Fly Right*, which has a retro West Coast tinge lingering under the walls of guitar squall. But no matter what song or style the Blind Shake offer up, they pummel you with it from the moment they take the stage, leaving little doubt as to who's the best live band in town.

BEST HIP-HOP PRODUCER

Mike the Martyr

www.facebook.com/mikethemartyr

A veritable rhymer in his own right, Mike the Martyr has emerged as one of the most sought-after beatmakers in the Twin Cities following his work with Baby Shel, Muja Messiah, Maria Isa, and Metasota, among gads of other local acts. Martyr's nostalgia-driven, sample-heavy work on the boards attracts rappers who learned to rhyme in the days of Pete Rock and DJ Premier. Something in Martyr's string-laden boom-bap sends MCs to a place where they can comfortably tap into their roots and lay down their slickest bars. It's up for debate whether he's best on the mic or behind the boards, but if Martyr's constantly updating Soundcloud is any indication, he's well on his way to mastering both.

BEST HIP-HOP ARTIST

Lizzo

www.lizzomusic.com

It's unbelievable that the queen of Minneapolis hip-hop, Lizzo, hasn't snagged this award even once in past years. She's had her most successful year yet — a performance on the *Late Show* before Letterman's retirement, her first sold-out headlining show at First Avenue, and the release of her sophomore record, *Big Grrrl Small World*. That critically acclaimed album features the banging single "Ain't I," a nod to 18th-century activist Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a Woman?," a question the 27-year-old MC roars repeatedly at the end of the song. Her next album won't be self-released, however, as the real-life Melissa Jefferson was signed to Atlantic Records in March. Lizzo's diversion from classic Rhymesayers-esque backpack rap gives Twin Cities hip-hop heads a breath of fresh air with her bold, authentic mix of soulful singing and silly-yet-woke rap bravado.

Readers' Choice: Lizzo

BEST NEW BAND

Bruise Violet

www.bruiseviolet.bandcamp.com

The teen-punk trio Bruise Violet set the Twin Cities music scene ablaze late in 2015, releasing a scorching debut EP, *Survival of the Prettiest*, in August, and laying waste to every stage they played throughout the year. Their songs are filled with raucous angst as well as relentlessly catchy hooks, while the group's boisterous musical influences are made quite clear by their Babes in Toyland-inspired band name. Bruise Violet seamlessly bridge the gap between the experimental fury of riot grrrl and the DIY aesthetic of garage rock, giving a fresh new take on punk in the process. The venues and crowds kept getting bigger for Bruise Violet as the past year wore on, with their spirited, assured anthems clearly resonating with young and old music fans alike. And with plenty of airplay on local radio, some high-profile gigs under their belt, and a solid No. 2 showing in our Picked to Click poll, the young group seems poised to break big in 2016.

Readers' Choice: Hippo Campus

BEST R&B ARTIST

Nick Jordan

www.nickjordan.bandcamp.com

Nick Jordan is to the Twin Cities as Frank Ocean is to New Orleans. Jordan put out his debut release, *NJ*, this past fall, and has been on the hustle ever since, frequenting shows at the Cabooze, the Dakota Jazz

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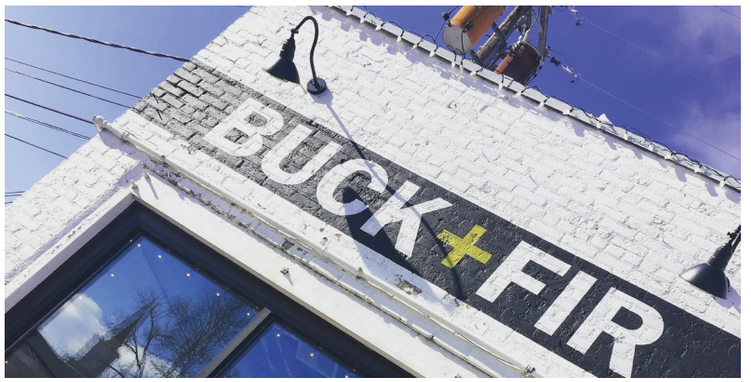

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Club, Acadia, and the Bedlam Theatre. Self-described as "soul food," Jordan has a sweet croon that vibes with the nostalgic '90s production by friend Luke Darger a.k.a. moonsidr_dlux. Having moved to St. Paul at age 18, he says he finds inspiration from Prince, Q-Tip, and Jhene Aiko, among others. Jordan, still in his early 20s, doesn't shy away from grand performances, either. His live shows and music videos add a new layer to the already funk-infused music; he carries out detailed choreography with a multitude of back-up dancers.

Readers' Choice: Prince

BEST METAL BAND

False

www.gileadmedia.net

City Pages catches some shit for ignoring the Twin Cities metal scene. Chief among our egregious oversights is False, the bludgeoning, doomsday-soundtracking metal band out of Minneapolis. The group's vocalist, known simply as Rachel, sounds like a rabid wolf choking on blood, as hellstorm guitars and relentlessly driving beats swirl and smash with fierce abandon during the band's 10-minute-plus songs. Guitarist Jimmy Claypool brings subtle hints of punk and hardcore to the blaring mix, which makes sense considering his role in former Twin Cities faves In Defence. Dropped last year via Oshkosh, Wisconsin, label Gilead Media, False's debut full-length, *Untitled*, earned the No. 21 spot on Pitchfork's year-end list of best metal releases. Consider this our formal apology for sleeping on False.

BEST FAMILY BAND

The Cactus Blossoms

www.thecactusblossoms.com

Jack Torrey and Page Burkum might have different last names, but the brothers from St. Paul are blood partners in reviving 1950s honkytonk. Their late-2015 song "Stoplight Kisses" betrays their years of covering mid-century standards, to the point where the *You're Dreaming* single feels like it could've been heard spilling out of any Studebaker in middle America 50 years ago. The duo has also brought JD McPherson into the family as a producer, co-opting their former tourmate into helping them bottle a little bit more of the vintage patina that's made McPherson a Current mainstay. *You're Dreaming* — which Rolling Stone named one of the 35 most-anticipated country releases of 2016 — feels warm. It feels nostalgic. But most of all, it feels damn good.

BEST BAND TO BREAK UP IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

The Replacements

www.thereplacementsofficial.com

The Replacements reunion never seemed built to last. The notoriously ramshackle Twin Cities rock legends regrouped in 2012, but called it quits (once again) before things grew too stale. Paul Westerberg, Tommy Stinson, and their newly assembled crew played a series of raucous live shows around the world, including a celebrated 2014 show at St. Paul's Midway Stadium. But as the tour wound down, Westerberg dropped hints that the party was coming to an end, sporting T-shirts that acerbically spelled out, "I have always loved you. Now I must whore my past." Rather than drag things out unceremoniously, the group ended things on a high in June. Tommy and Paul have already gone on to other projects, with Stinson focusing on his solo career and Westerberg forming a new group with Juliana Hatfield called the I Don't Cares. While the new music that was rumored to come from the 'Mats never materialized, at least they brought their brilliant catalog of songs back to the stage for a few years.

BEST BAND NAME

Ass Bastards of Mordor

www.facebook.com/AssBastards

City Pages (sorta, kinda, not really) scientifically determined this one. Back in September, we launched a poll asking for the best/worst band name in the Twin Cities. Amazing candidates such as Gay Witch Abortion, the Pistol Whippin' Party Penguins, and Hyperslob & the Goat Meat Explosion emerged. But one act ran away with the contest, earning more than 20 percent of the 538 total votes: Ass Bastards of Mordor. The sludgy punk-metal outfit formerly known as Arnold's Big Outrageous

EYES on MINNESOTA

Kathryn Sieve, owner of Winsome Goods, wears frames from The Spectacle Shoppe's killer vintage collection.

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Muscles promises to "melt your dick with rock and rolls," an on-brand decree from the fantastical quartet known for hit songs like "Heathen Highway," "Doom Nuke Em' 3D 64," and "Hobo Killer." Long live Ass Bastards of Mordor!

BEST REUNION

Babes in Toyland

www.facebook.com/babesintoylandofficial

A City Pages cover story from June detailed how Babes in Toyland's fierce resolve, combined with curious funding from former Google execs, resurrected the Twin Cities grunge-punk legends. The heyday lineup of Lori Barbero, Kat Bjelland, and Maureen Herman stormed the Rock the Garden stage for their homecoming gig in June, one that surely scared the bejesus out of at least a few public radio listeners in attendance. That pummeling, triumphant set was marked by more than a few technical hiccups and tears, but the bludgeoning performance proved Babes are vital and volatile as ever. After the band hit the festival circuit, she-said-she-said infighting sent Herman packing in August, opening up bass duties for 23-year-old local Clara Salyer. That reformed Babes lineup took a stumbling, trashing January victory lap through First Avenue, capping 12 months of a very welcome return from the rock 'n' roll crypt.

BEST ALBUM COVER

VHS, Fury Things

www.furythings.bandcamp.com/album/vhs

What started out as a playful design meant to accompany a cassette-only release eventually blossomed into one of the most striking album covers in recent memory. The layout for Fury Things' debut full-length, *VHS*, is both an homage to the classic, streamlined packaging of ancient videocassettes, as well as a modern spin on the audio recording tape boxes of yesteryear. The cheeky album title completes the throwback concept, but the feisty songs contained on the record are decisively modern and pulse with a contemporary urgency. Ultimately, it is the clean and clever album art created by guitarist/singer Kyle Werstein that gets your attention first, catching your eye before the bristling garage-rock sound of Fury Things ever hits your eardrums. And in the digital age, where album art isn't valued nearly as much as it was during vinyl's heyday, it's gratifying to see a cover that stands out.

BEST LOCAL COMP

Ecstattic Forever

www.ecstatticstudio.bandcamp.com

Ali Jaafar might have the most exciting attic in Minneapolis. The top floor of his home is where the Hollow Boys frontman/recording engineer keeps Ecstattic Studio, a professional recording space in which dozens of bands around town have captured their self-funded albums. To document its 2015 work, the studio released *Ecstattic Forever*, the fifth in a series of compilations that collect tunes recorded, mixed, and mastered by Jaafar. Like a post-rock ice cream shop, *Ecstattic Forever* samples every flavor of DIY guitar music, from the psychedelic grunge-pop of Lunch Duchess' "Cry" to the shadowy doomgaze of Elliot Reed and Yume Nikki's collaboration "Frozen." The comp's 16 tracks — including cuts by Strange Relations, Joey Joey Michaels, and Ego Death — define Jaafar's "artist-fi" recording style, which, as he puts it, captures "however dirty, clean, wet, dry, big, small, or whatever the song (and its composers) require."

BEST RECORD STORE DAY LOCATION

Electric Fetus

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www.electricfetus.com

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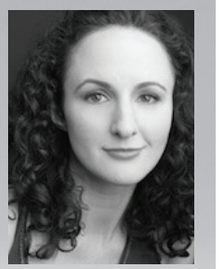


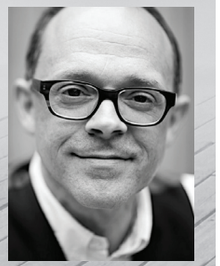
IN THE MINES

By KATE HAMILL

Thursday May 5th, Saturday May 7th, and Monday May 9th

AT THE RITZ THEATER

In Appalachian coal-mining territory, a devastating cave-in forever changes and intertwines the lives of three imperfect women - who soon find themselves swept up by forces beyond their control. This epic, imaginative mutation of Greek myths interweaves traditional folk music with magical realism to create a new mythology examining the forces (both seen and unseen) that shape our lives.



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AT THE RITZ THEATER

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THE ILLYRIA PROJECT

Book, Music and Lyrics by JACKSON DORAN and POSTELL PRINGLE

Thursday May 19th, Saturday May 21th, and Monday May 23th

AT THE CAPRI THEATER

The Illyria Project is the story of Viola, a barista and aspiring rapper who seizes the opportunity to fulfill her dream of becoming a star when she finds out about an audition for a new show, *Shipwrecked, The Musical.* A hip hop musical with a book written entirely in rap verse and performed over beats, *The Illyria Project* weaves together soul, rock, and rap music in a rollicking interpretation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.*

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to the vinyl-loving masses with coffee, doughnuts from Glam Doll, and food trucks. In addition to all of those perks, the Fetus also brings in top-notch local and national talent to perform for free inside the store. While Record Store Day has grown into a commercial behemoth, the Fetus manages to throw an inclusive party every year that reminds folks that the day is ultimately about our shared love of music, as well as supporting your local independent record store.

Readers' Choice: Electric Fetus

BEST ALBUM OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Ones and Sixes, Low

www.chairkickers.com

Low delivered one of the best albums of their career more than two decades after the release of their debut. That not only speaks to their endurance within the ever-changing music industry, but also the remarkable creative talent that lies at the heart of the Duluth trio. The 12 stirring songs that make up their recent release for Sub Pop showcase the unhurried, emotional arrangements that have become their trademark. *Ones and Sixes* also features the insightful, penetrating lyrics of Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker, who add their poignant poetry to the hushed elegance of the songs. It would be easy to repeat yourself when you're working within the minimalistic sonic parameters that Low frequent, but the band continue to add new, invigorating twists to their somber sound. *Ones and Sixes* represents a stellar late-period addition to an already distinguished catalog from a North Country band that continues to grow and prosper with each release.

Readers' Choice: *Big Grrrl, Small World*, Lizzo

BEST EP

Night Flowers, Tiny Deaths

www.soundcloud.com/tinydeathsband

Vocalist Claire de Lune and producer Grant Cutler returned as Tiny Deaths to release a stunning second EP, *Night Flowers*. The raw emotions of these synth-driven gems shine majestically, as de Lune's intoxicating vocals mesh seamlessly with Cutler's inventive, textured beats. The four tracks are drenched with heartbreak, loss, and longing, but the dynamic material is never bogged down by the weight of the sentiments expressed in the lyrics. The songs instead soar freely, unencumbered by the tricky affairs of the heart they detail. De Lune and Cutler traded creative ideas between Minneapolis and New York, before Cutler returned to the Twin Cities to record their new EP with Lance Conrad at Humans Win! Studios in northeast Minneapolis. The results of their fruitful collaboration represent a fresh, pulsating new addition to the burgeoning electro-pop scene in the area, with Tiny Deaths offering up yet another deeply moving, evocative artistic statement that leaves us entranced and wanting more.

BEST MIXTAPE

Couch Potato, Bobby Raps and Corbin

www.bobbyrapscorbin.bandcamp.com

The Stand4rd have totally recontextualized how the Twin Cities rap scene is presented to the world, offering a pivot from the Rhymesayers-dominant storyteller style. At the helm of this existential, atmospheric turn was the reclusive Corbin (the erstwhile Spooky Black), whose soulful rasp is disconnected from his skinny frame. Though group figurehead Allan Kingdom found some synchronicity with Corbin, it's low-key groupmate Bobby Raps who helped create a nearly perfect vehicle for the pair's moribund nihilism when they collaborated on *Couch Potato*. From the goosebumps of "Frozen Tundra" to the heartsick yarn of "Burdened," the EP shows that the members of the Stand4rd aren't nearly finished reinventing the local hip-hop scene.

BEST REISSUE

The Twin/Tone Years, the Replacements

www.rhino.com/artist/the-replacements

Could the vinyl box set reissue of the Replacements' first four records — *Sorry Ma, Forgot to Take Out the Trash* ('81), *Stink* ('82), *Hootenanny* ('83), and *Let It Be* ('84) — be stuffed with more goodies, booklets, remasters, rarities, doodads, and whathaveyous? Sure, that'd be nice, but let's not guild the goddamn lily: Your life is infinitely improved by being able to scoop up the Twin/Tone-era discography of Minneapolis' greatest punk band for $67. Released in August 2015, two months after the reformed group called it quits (see Best Band to Break Up in the Past 12 Months), *The Twin/Tone Years* tracks the band's early evolution — from the scrappy

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punk blasters on *Sorry Ma* to the coming-of-age genius of *Let It Be*. Drag the needle across these classics as you power-read Bob Mehr's indispensable new Replacements biography, *Trouble Boys*, and 'Mats nirvana will be "Within Your Reach."

BEST SINGLE

"Midway," Bad Bad Hats

www.badbadhats.com

You could legitimately pick any of the insanely catchy tracks on Bad Bad Hats' glorious debut full-length, *Psychic Reader*, as the best single of the year. But the breezy, buoyant charm of "Midway" stands out as the jewel of the bunch, as Kerry Alexander's coy vocals and sprightly guitar riffs keep the song churning, entirely locked in with Chris Hoge's vibrant drum beat and Noah Boswell's bass line. There's a wistful love story recounted within the lyrics, as the candid narrative goes along seamlessly with the carefree, summery vibes of the song itself. "Midway" also fluidly blends the timeless allure of '50s radio hits with the dynamic pulse of the modern music scene, combining sonic elements from the past and present to give rise to an authentic, entirely of-the-moment sound that is undeniably fresh and utterly irresistible.

BEST COVER SONG

"I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus," Rupert Angeleyes

www.soundcloud.com/rupertangeleyes

It's not anywhere near the holidays, but the warm spring weather won't get in your way of enjoying Rupert Angeleyes' sweet, warped take on "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus." Angeleyes frontman Kyle Sobczak stopped by Radio K to perform his tape machine-assisted rendition of the holiday classic, along with lo-fi covers of the Beach Boys' "Little Saint Nick," "Santa Baby," and a tongue-in-cheek take on Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas." Aside from coloring the Christmas classics with his signature psych-pop warbles, Sobczak added in a bizarre "conversation" with a deep-voiced Santa himself, in which ol' St. Nick confesses that he has a crush on Sobczak and that Rupert's 2014 release, *Young Sunset*, is his favorite album. It's a Christmas miracle!

BEST CONCERT OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Lizzo at First Avenue

Twin Cities music fans have known of Lizzo's prodigious talents for years now. But after circling the globe with the dynamic, self-assured hip-hop anthems featured on her vibrant new album, *Big Grrrl Small World*, the locally based MC returned to a sold-out First Ave in February to celebrate. The rapturous audience was ready to party, as Lizzo continuously received boisterous between-song ovations from her adoring fanbase. The transformation Lizzo underwent from her time as a role player with the Chalice to the flat-out superstar she is today has been a pleasure to witness, and the local hip-hop fans who supported her from the start take pride in seeing her blossom on the music world's biggest stages. This triumphant homecoming gig, which went down weeks before she was signed to Atlantic Records, was confirmation that Lizzo is making some of the biggest, freshest waves in rap, as well as a celebration of the deeply talented Twin Cities hip-hop community.

Readers' Choice: Rock the Garden

BEST CONCERT OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS (TOURING)

D'Angelo and the Vanguard at First Avenue

After disappearing from the music scene for 14 years following the chart-topping success of 2000's *Voodoo*, D'Angelo made a celebrated comeback with *Black Messiah*. After his intimate 2013 show with ?uestlove gave us a glimpse of the strength of his new songs, D'Angeolo brought his full Vanguard backing band back to First Ave to properly roll through his scintillating new material. The soulful showman played to the crowd, looking stylish and

totally in command of the room, while his band gave a vibrant edge to his R&B jams. After shirking the spotlight for so long, D'Angelo appeared totally at ease, delivering a heartfelt, impassioned performance that showcased his estimable songwriting talents and undeniable star quality. Let's just hope that this singular modern artist continues to share his musical gifts with his dedicated fans for years to come. Because the fractured world — as well as First Avenue on that sultry September night — needed *Black Messiah* when it arrived, and we crave whatever D'Angelo has planned next.

Readers' Choice: Alabama Shakes

BEST MUSIC RESIDENCY

The Bad Plus at Dakota Jazz Club

The Bad Plus' annual Christmastime residency at the Dakota is routinely one of the musical highlights of the holiday calendar. The globally loved NYC-based trio — featuring ubiquitous local drummer Dave King, pianist Ethan Iverson, and bassist Reid Anderson — brings its own unique twist to modern jazz, working well-known rock 'n' roll and pop covers into sets filled with adventurous originals, all to the delight of the intimate audience. In addition to their well-received recent records — *Inevitable Western* and their dynamic interpretation of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* — the Bad Plus have also teamed up with saxophonist Joshua Redman to expand their pulsating sound. Their vibrant live performances are filled with studio gems from their 15-plus year career, as well as surprising, inventive covers (Nirvana, Blondie, Black Sabbath) from their deep record collections. Each year, the Bad Plus provide a welcome alternative to the saccharine Christmas songs that grow old fast, and give area music fans something to truly cherish around the holidays.

BEST MUSIC VIDEO

"Wedding," Poliça

For "Wedding," Poliça's second single from their new album, *United Crushers*, the local quartet tackled police brutality with a powerful music video directed by Isaac Gale. In addition to grainy footage of aggressive police raids and tumultuous confrontations, vocalist Channy Leaneagh and a coterie of *Sesame Street*-like puppets teach schoolchildren about what to do when police officers approach, as well as hosting a craft time where they learn how to fashion a gas mask out of household objects. The song itself is pulsating and ominous in its own right, but Gale provides a thoroughly modern twist on the lost innocence of the public service announcement. The unforgettable video adds another menacing layer to the track, while calling into question the overly hostile role of policing in our current society.

BEST MUSIC VIDEO DIRECTOR

Adam J. Dunn

www.adamjdunn.com

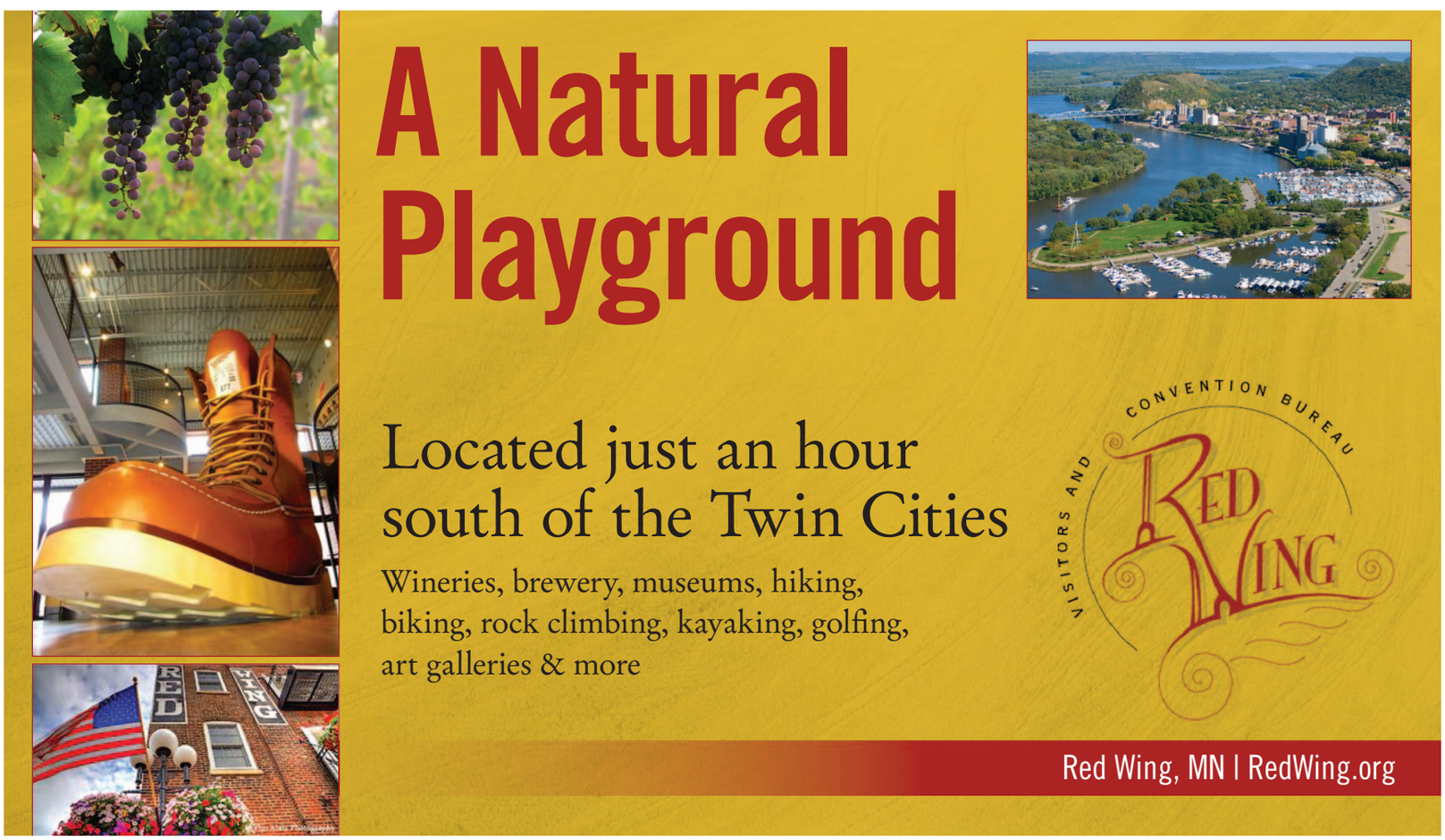
In his stark music video series, Lights and a Backdrop (LAAB), Adam J. Dunn has crafted a stylish collection of work that stands apart from big-budget videos. Instead, his videos favor pieces that are more intimate and emotional. Filmed in a minimalist setting, with just lighting and a plain background to illuminate the artists, Dunn's clips put the focus on the musicians and the songs themselves, letting the material do much of the heavy lifting. By paring music videos down to their essence, he allows the artists to shine while doing away with much of the superfluous nature of modern-day music videos. In addition to his gorgeous LAAB work, Dunn has also directed proper, full-scale music videos for Dessa, Atmosphere, Allan Kingdom, and a litany of independent local bands and artists, helping them spread their underground songs to the masses. Dunn's keen artistic eye and impressive body of work have firmly established the director as one of the best the Twin Cities has to offer.

BEST SONGWRITER

Matt Latterell

www.mattlatterell.bandcamp.com

The road Matt Latterell took to arrive at the songs that would make up his stun-



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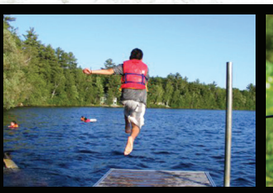

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ning new album, *Phase & Field*, was long and winding. The singer-songwriter and hardworking sideman moved back home to Foley, Minnesota, four years ago, but gradually returned to the area following a series of breakups, bringing with him an impressive batch of nearly 60 songs inspired by his experiences. Latterell whittled those tracks down to 10 emotionally wrought, impeccably structured songs, with each number fueled by his plaintive vocals and Americana-laden arrangements. Latterell leaned on many of his talented friends in the local music community — as well as a generous grant he received from the Central Minnesota Arts Board — who were happy to welcome him back to Minneapolis. The gorgeous songs on *Phase & Field* reflect the long, fractured journey he took to get here, and the pain and wisdom he experienced along the way.

BEST VOCALIST

Leah Ottman

www.soundcloud.com/lott-music

Talented singer-songwriter Leah Ottman performs solo as LOTT. She also plays violin in We Are the Willows and various other acts around town, including on Poliça's latest, *United Crushers*. While her vibrant violin work creates the pulsating heart that drives her solo music, it's her golden, angelic vocals that will stop you in your tracks. Her mellifluous voice is enough to cause a boisterous 7th St. Entry to fall completely into a hush, entirely under her sonic spell. When you have vocals as true and soothing as Ottman does, you can rely on them to carry the song. But Ottman's classical training gives her a sharp ear for delicate, refined arrangements, and her stylish looped violin work imbues her songs with a decidedly modern flair. While LOTT has only released a few singles, those inspired tracks are enough to leave local music fans excited about any future releases from the extremely gifted vocalist.

Readers' Choice: Dessa, Prince

BEST LOCAL RECORD LABEL

Modern Radio

www.modern-radio.com

Sixteen years is a long time to navigate the tricky terrain of the notoriously fickle music world. But Modern Radio Record Label has persevered through ever-changing tastes and trends, all while putting out some of the most adventurous rock music in the Twin Cities and beyond. The label was founded in 1999 by Coon Rapids, Minnesota, native Tom Loftus, who honed his tastes as a student at St. John's University. He carried the punk and alternative scene from St. Cloud's legendary Java Joint with him to Minneapolis, and began putting out records by his friends and favorite bands. Loftus eventually partnered up with his childhood friend Pete Mielech in 2005, and the two have been expertly curating the label together ever since, putting out celebrated releases by Signal to Trust, the Plastic Constellations, STNNNG, Vampire Hands, Hollow Boys, Oaks, and Fury Things, among many others. Modern Radio helped shape the Twin Cities indie-rock scene, and its impact will always be appreciated. Here's to whatever new sounds the label has in store for us over the next decade or so.

Readers' Choice: Rhymesayers Entertainment

BEST OUTDOOR SHOW

Memory Lanes Block Party

www.memorylanesmpls.com

Booze, bands, beach volleyball, bowling. While most summer fests can offer those first two, it's more difficult to find that rare outdoor show where you can take a break in between bands to bowl a quick 10 frames. That's part of the reason why the two-day Memory Lanes Block Party is our best outdoor show. Last May, Tickle Torture, Rupert Angeleyes, Southside Desire, and more helped ring in summertime with melodious jams outside of the Seward bowl hole. Here's hoping this year's stellar lineup — featuring Mixed Blood Majority, Legendary Shack Shakers, Tiny Deaths, and many more — comes close to Tickle Torture's glitzy, pyrotechnical set from last year, complete with sexy, sexy fireworks.

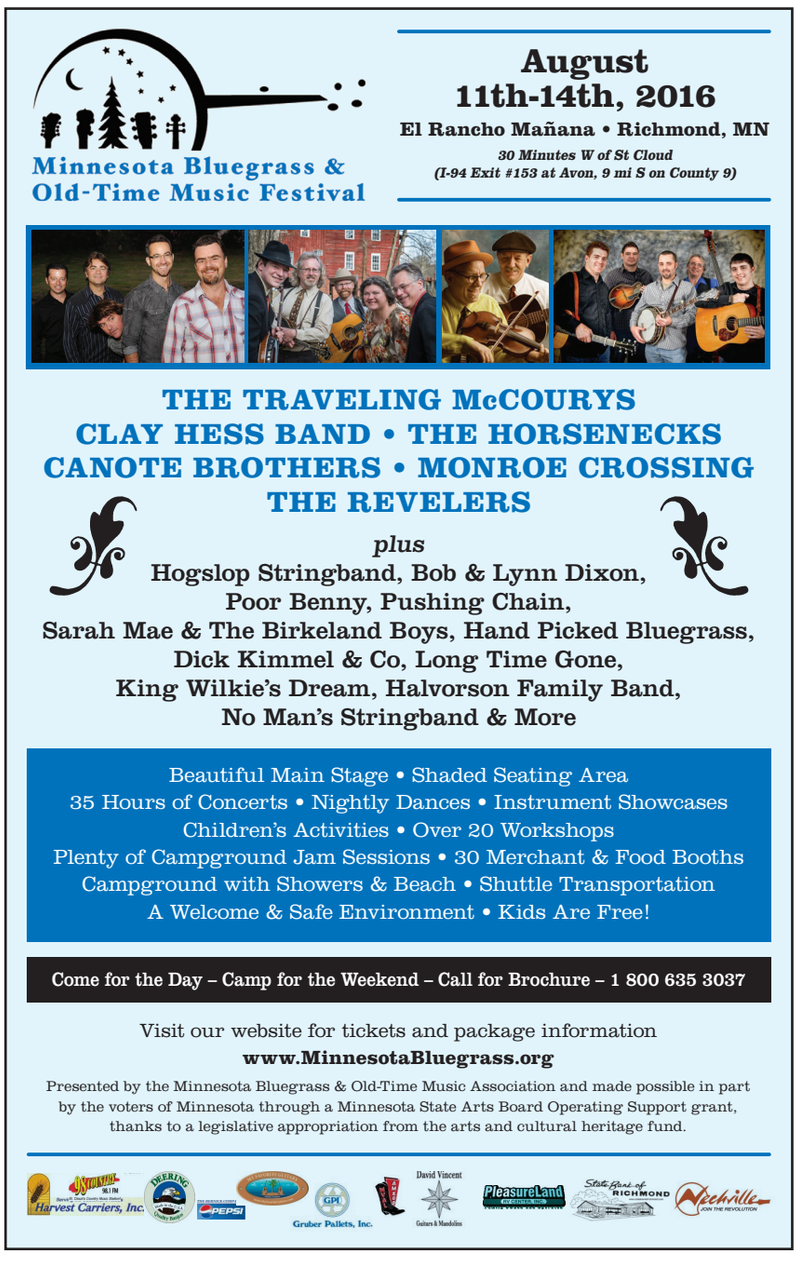
BEST MUSIC FESTIVAL

Soundset

1265 SNELLING AVE. N.
ST. PAUL
612-377-0044

www.soundsetfestival.com

Somehow, despite all indications that it can't possibly improve, Soundset still gets better every single year. There's no real competition for a better hip-hop gathering anywhere in the United States, never mind Minnesota. A near-typhoon couldn't stop 2015's show from being another massive success, with memorable



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performances by Dessa, Ice Cube, and upstart Manny Phesto. At this point, the question is really whether Soundset — more than Fifth Element, Atmosphere, or the label itself — is truly the crowning achievement of Rhymesayers. Especially now that the day-long concert is back within city limits at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds after seven years in Shakopee. Propelled by A$AP Rocky, the Roots, Future, and Common, Soundset's local festival dominance should continue into 2016.

Readers' Choice: Rock the Garden

BEST MUSIC CONTROVERSY

Local designer launches GoFundMe for Kanye

"I write this to you my brothers while still $53 million dollars in personal debt ... please pray we overcome... this is my true heart...." So tweeted global superstar Kanye West in February, an admission that won zero sympathy with 99.9 percent of people in the world. He's the husband to Forbes' No. 33 highest-paid celebrity, after all. Among those in the sliver of a percentage that felt Yeezy's pain? Twin Cities designer Jeremy Piatt, who drew the internet's ire when he inexplicably crowd-funded $6,954 via a GoFundMe campaign that read, "Kanye West, prolific entertainer/fashion icon/celebrity/member of the Kardashian family needs our help!" Mercifully, Kanye's camp refused the aid package, and Piatt offered to donate the cash to charity or dole out refunds. Thus concluded a dumb, dumb chapter in Minnesota-affiliated pop-culture controversy.

BEST RADIO PERSONALITY

Mary Lucia

www.thecurrent.org

Beloved 89.3 the Current DJ Mary Lucia went through some serious shit in 2015. She returned to the airwaves in November following a seven-month leave to deal with the legal and emotional fallout of being stalked. "Been a long time since I rock and rolled," Lucia said in an open letter announcing her comeback. "Thanks as always for your kindness and thoughtfulness. Your friend and mine, Looch." It's a treat having the longtime Twin Cities radio personality back during the weekday drive home. Her love of rock 'n' roll, cats, and "No Apology" tracks is infectious, as is her effortlessly cool demeanor. The outpouring of love for Looch over the past year proved she's more than just a DJ — she's a local institution, a genuine bad-ass, and a friend.

Readers' Choice: Mary Lucia

BEST RADIO STATION

BOB 106.1 FM

www.mybobcountry.com

It's no secret that modern country radio is a complete mess. The poppy broification of Nashville has Hank Williams weeping from the great honkytonk in the sky. The only twang worth its salt on Twin Cities airwaves? That'd be BOB 106.1 FM. The station's tagline ("Turn Your Knob to BOB") won't disappoint, as the small-scale frequency spins throwback country giants — Glen Campbell, Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson — alongside today's more palatable acts — Tim McGraw, Easton Corbin, Miranda Lambert, etc. You really can't go wrong with a station that features a daily "Mandatory Merle" block of songs. The occasional reading of Bible verses won't appeal to all listeners, but it's just another element of BOB's folksy, down-home charm. Bonus: BOB broadcasts games of the only non-losers in local sports — your WNBA champion Minnesota Lynx.

Readers' Choice: 89.3 the Current

BEST FESTIVAL (SUMMER)

Red Hot Art

STEVENS SQUARE PARK,
1801 STEVENS AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS

www.facebook.com/RedHotArt

While the big summertime art festivals are certainly popular, they're rarely a Twin Cities event. Often the booths are too pricey for local artists, pushing them out of participating. This is not the case at Red Hot Art Fest. The event, which traditionally takes place over two days in July, showcases around 200 up-and-coming local artists each year, thanks to no application fee and affordable space rental (got $40? Then you're in!). Located in Stevens Square Park, the event has a community-friendly feel, with many festival-goers biking, busing, or simply walking to the fun. A few dozen bands usually take the stage to play sets in the afternoons and evenings, and Twin Cities food trucks stop by to feed the crowds. It's

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obvious Red Hot Art is doing something right — the festival will be celebrating its 15th year in 2016.

Readers' Choice: Twin Cities Pride

BEST FESTIVAL (WINTER)

Art Shanty Projects

5050 LAKE AVE. N.
WHITE BEAR LAKE
612-567-6844

www.artshantyprojects.org

Since 2005, the Art Shanty Projects has been bringing joy to the frozen lakes of Minnesota in the dead of winter. In 2015, event organizers took a year off, but they had a plan to come back bigger and better than ever as a nonprofit. In 2016, 19 shanties, ice-fishing-style shacks with an artsy twist, took to the frozen lake for a month of shenanigans. There were shanties that served up treats from local chefs, a dance party shanty, and a shanty featuring frozen native plants (which could also be tasted). Outside, the Pedal Bears roamed the ice, and Art Cars paraded each weekend. May the Art Shanties thrive even more as the fest enters its next decade.

Readers' Choice: St. Paul Winter Carnival

BEST KARAOKE

VFW Uptown

2916 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-823-6233

www.uptownvfw246.org

Let's face it: There are plenty of bars throughout the Twin Cities where you can get tipsy and scream Bon Jovi lyrics into a microphone. The reality, however, is that not all karaoke bars are created equal. The Lyn-Lake VFW is a hall of fame-worthy karaoke bar, offering would-be singers the chance to get fueled up on cheap booze and belt out their favorite tunes almost every night of the week. In addition to a massive song book that features everything from quintessential '80s power ballads to shit-kicking country anthems, the best part of karaoke at the VFW is the crowd. On any given night, you'll find a healthy mix of barflies, bachelorette parties, and hipsters ready to pour their hearts out to a Whitney Houston mega-hit, or get the party started with some boy-band bubblegum pop. No unnecessary video screens or special effects are needed at the VFW, just a killer collection of music, great drink specials, and a room full of rowdy revelers looking to channel their inner Mariah, Shania, or Rick Astley.

Readers' Choice: Vegas Lounge

BEST COMEDY CLUB

Comedy Corner Underground

1501 WASHINGTON AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-492-1197

www.comedycornerunderground.com

Comedy Corner Underground is ground zero for the coolest shit happening in Twin Cities standup comedy. The only nonprofit, comic-run room in Minnesota is actually in the basement of Seven Corners tavern Corner Bar, but its spirited, DIY ethos sets it apart from the flat-screens and high-fives upstairs. "Just pretend you're being super daring and going to a speakeasy or something," CCU explains on its website. Once underground, you'll discover the most inventive hahas and make-'em-ups in town, including comedy melee Joke Fight, the women-produced showcase PSSY CTRL, and even national headliners like Josh Gondelman and Shane Mauss. Launched in 2008, CCU serves as the edgier little brother to Acme Comedy Co., providing an inclusive, smartly run outlet for rising talent to take chances and win laughs.

Readers' Choice: Acme Comedy Co.

BEST LOCAL STANDUP COMEDIAN

Tommy Ryman

www.tommyryman.com

Locally based 32-year-old comedy dynamo Tommy Ryman endears audiences with his reliably affable personality and self-effacing whimsy that is oftentimes as abjectly absurd as it is funny. Ryman has been toiling away at clubs and open mics around the country for the better part of the last decade, but it was only recently that he's enjoyed something of a breakthrough. Netting an appearance on the first season of the newly rebooted and revamped *Last Comic Standing*, a "Best of the Midwest" title at the prestigious Gilda's Laughfest, and some high Twitter praise from Mayor Betsy Hodges all in the last two years, it seems as though Ryman's finally coming into his own.

Readers' Choice: Tiffany Norton

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BEST COMEDY OPEN MIC

Death Comedy Jam

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612-340-9738

www.grumpys-bar.com

Finding a bar or club to catch some great live comedy has become easier and easier over the years, with more stages hosting showcases and open-mic nights. But if you really want to see the good, bad, and ugly of local comedy, you need to hit up the Death Comedy Jam, every Wednesday at Grumpy's in downtown Minneapolis. Now in its 13th year, the Death Comedy Jam is easily the most brutal room for comedy, which also makes it the most fun. While other clubs in town are known for their smart, comedy-savvy crowds, you never know who or what might happen on any given Wednesday at Grumpy's. Hosted by veteran comedian Chris Maddock, the show has seen some of the biggest names in comedy drop in for a late-night, no-holds-barred set that the most hardcore comedy fans would kill to see. Other nights, the show breaks down into a standoff between boozed-up Twin Cities comedy regulars and even boozier crowds of hecklers looking to get in on the action. No matter what, there is no such thing as a boring night at Death Comedy Jam.

Readers' Choice: Acme Comedy Co.

BEST BAR GAME

Trivia Mafia

www.triviamafia.com

Of all the trivia nights out there, none is as ubiquitous as Trivia Mafia. That's because the formula works. The setup is simple: There are three rounds of five questions each, a halftime break, followed by three more rounds (including the lightning round, which requires groups to think fast). There's also a sound round to test those with music knowledge, and an image round. If you really want to go the extra mile, you can pop online beforehand to answer the internet-only question. The questions are diverse, so you never know when your weird pocket of knowledge will be of use, be that naming TV shows from the '80s, board games from the '60s, or just knowing anything about the Periodic Table. On any given night, Trivia Mafia might be happening at several different bars at different times, making it one of the easier events to get to as well.

Readers' Choice: Trivia Mafia

BEST MOVIE THEATER

Uptown Theatre

2906 HENNEPIN AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-823-3005

www.landmarktheatres.com/minneapolis/uptown-theatre

Uptown Theatre isn't the spot to go if you're looking for the latest blockbuster or romcom (you can find that down the street at its sister venue, Lagoon Cinema). It is, however, a place to go to see weird flicks, cult classics, movies so bad they're good, and cinematic works you love but haven't thought of in years. Midnight movies on Friday and Saturday are usually amazing experiences, whether you're a nighttime stoner, caffeinated from date-night coffee, or a major film buff. Screenings range from the amazingly awful (*The Room* frequently plays) to delightfully retro (*The Muppet Caper, Ghostbusters*, and *Moulin Rouge* have screened in recent years). During the week, you might find animated shorts, foreign films, and critically lauded indie films worth checking out. And, thanks to 2012's renovations, you don't have to sneak your booze in either, as the balcony area offers a full bar. This June, the theater will be celebrating a century, with classic-movie screenings ranging from *Citizen Kane* to *The Godfather*.

Readers' Choice: Riverview Theater

BEST PLACE TO WATCH A MOVIE OUTDOORS

Stevens Square Park

1801 STEVENS AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-874-2840

www.sscoweb.org

The city park board plunked down $41,000 a century ago for a little swath of paradise, set among country estates, that would become Stevens Square Park. It could be the best 41k spent in Minneapolis history. On a handful of summertime nights, community groups invite the world to come over for "Cinema & Civics." Dogs, kids, neighbors, and friends assemble on the green carpet beneath a canopy of trees just south of skyscrapers. Games like bocce ball and Jenga kick off the evening. A band plays at 8 p.m. The movies start at dusk. Even if you gotta work in the morning, it's worth staying up. Last year's screenings included *Kung Fu Panda* and *The Princess Bride*, in which Westley asks Buttercup: "You think this happens every day?" At Stevens Square Park, it doesn't, so make sure to mark it on the calendar.

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BEST COSTUMER/ COSPLAYER

Nicole Snell (KikiCraft)

www.kikicraft.com

On any given weekend, cosplayers from all over Minnesota come together for conventions celebrating comics, television, movies, and pretty much all things fantasy. Costumers and cosplayers have begun to carve out a niche in the local art community, both for their creativity and their ability to weave together an alternate universe through their designs. Nicole Snell is a longtime costumer and cosplayer who is often the center of attention at local conventions, comic books shows, and children's events. Whether she's saving the world as Wonder Woman or entertaining kids as a Disney princess, Snell has shown an incredible amount of versatility in the types of costumes she is able to create, as well as how she can adapt her theme to fit any audience. As she says on her website, sometimes life is better when you're dressed as a superhero.

BEST CARTOONIST

Ken Avidor

www.avidorstudios.com

Five years ago, a lot of people had their eyes on local supervillain Tom Petters. Only one, however, was drawing what he saw. Sketching cartoons of the day-to-day happenings of the trial helped put Ken Avidor on the map in the eyes of many. The steady stream of work he's produced since that time has made him one of the most prolific and dynamic artists in our insanely talent-rich cities. Whether he's capturing fairgoers at the Minnesota State Fair, sharing his view of other artists through sketches like he did this past fall at the St. Paul Classical Music Crawl, or penning his own graphic novel as he did last spring with the 10-part saga *Bicyclopolis*, Avidor is equal parts clever, creative, and observant of the nuances of everyday life.

BEST LITERARY PRESS

Coffee House Press

79 13TH AVE. NE #110
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612-338-0125

www.coffeehousepress.org

Founded in 1984, Coffee House Press is a local nonprofit that nurtures the local literary scene as much as it dazzles on a national scale. Housed in the Grain Belt Bottling House in northeast Minneapolis, Coffee House has published a variety of best-selling and award-winning work over the years, such as *Blood Dazzler* by poet Patricia Smith and *Our Sometimes Sister* by novelist Norah Labiner. Other notable authors include essayist and poet Ron Padgett and memoirist Kao Kaliya Yang. It's not unusual for Coffee House to pick up literary awards throughout the year. So far, in 2016, Valeria Luiselli is a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Fiction for *Faces in the Crowd*, which has

Benefiting People and Pets Together and providing fundraising opportunities for other MN-based animal charities.

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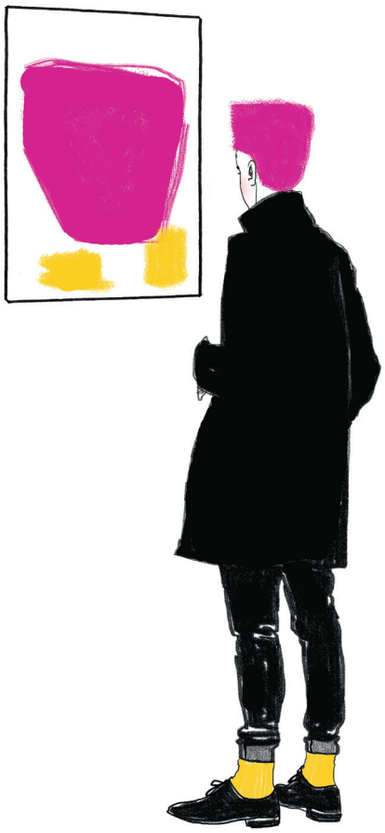

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BEST WRITER

Marlon James

www.penguin.com

So far as we know, Marlon James didn't actually do all that much fiction writing in 2015. But it was last fall that James, a professor at Macalester College in St. Paul, learned he had won the Man Booker Award, the most prestigious literary prize in the United Kingdom, for his *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. The novel, his third, is a sprawling tale built around a true story of an assassination attempt on Bob Marley in James' native Jamaica. The book wraps in drug warlords, the CIA, and crooked politicians corrupting the island nation's soul. It's not that James set down his pen in 2015. The author produced a series of essays for the Guardian, and one in the New York Times, recounting his years as a closeted gay man in Jamaica, a frequent wannabe New Yorker, and, then unexpectedly but happily, a Minnesotan. "Dead people never stop talking," James wrote in *A Brief History*. Let's hope he always hears their voices.

BEST ART GALLERY

Bockley Gallery

2123 W. 21ST ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-377-4669

www.bockleygallery.com

Compared to what's happening in other galleries around the Twin Cities, there's something very different about the aesthetic presented at Bockley Gallery. While some of the artists that Bockley represents — such as Jim Denomie, Andrea Carlson, and Julie Buffalohead — have been showcased at other local spaces and around the country, seeing solo shows of artists of such caliber in an intimate space is a real treat. Bockley offers group shows as well, with an intriguing mix of fresh voices. The gallery features many of the most distinctive Native voices in Minnesota, as well as outliers like Dietrich Sieling, Lauren Roche, and Zoran Mojsilov. The gallery, situated on the same block as Birchbark Books and Native Arts in the Kenwood neighborhood, offers a cozy atmosphere to get to know some of the most exciting local artists.

Readers' Choice: The Soap Factory

Jean Gabin + Chow Yun-fat?

One of the most intriguing questions in cinema history about two of the greatest film stars of their eras, revealed!

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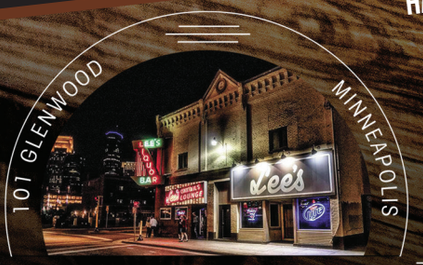

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BEST GALLERY EXHIBITION

"In Which _____ and Others Discover the End"

PUBLIC FUNCTIONARY,
1400 12TH AVE. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-296-1811

www.publicfunctionary.org

Liz Miller is usually a solo artist, painstakingly cutting felt, foam, and other materials and bolting them into vast installations that transform spaces into otherworldly environments. The work presented tends to lack pretense and academic affectation, instead focusing artists with original voices. For the installation "In Which ____ and Others Discover the End," however, she took the bold step of inviting collaborators. The performance collective Supergroup, experimental playwright Rachel Jendrzejewski, and art-rock band Brute Heart joined to help her investigate the ways in which her work could progress in new directions — not simply in form, but also in meaning. Sound, movement, texture, color, even the tactility of the installation changed during the performances, which took climate change as a starting point. For Public Functionary, which prides itself on being a non-traditional space for inclusiveness and creativity, Miller's installation and the collaborative performances took that mission to a new level.

BEST NONTRADITIONAL GALLERY SPACE

House of Balls

1504 S. SEVENTH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-332-3992

www.houseofballs.com

For more than 20 years, Allen Christian has invited visitors to step inside his House of Balls and experience a world of strange, fascinating, and awe-inspiring works of art. The unique energy emanating from House of Balls can best be described as off-putting but captivating. As you approach the anti-gallery, you are greeted by the giant, man-powered Pedal-Bear (which is also often spotted at the Art Shanty Projects) and hand-carved metal statues that were created from old air ducts that Christian pulled out of the building during renovations. Inside, Christian showcases pieces created from a number of non-traditional materials, including animal skulls, abandoned bicycles, and bowling balls. Thanks to his new, larger working space/gallery on the West Bank, it's safe to say the House of Balls will continue to feed off the energy of its visitors and the surrounding community for years to come.

BEST MUSEUM

Minnesota Museum of American Art (MMAA)

141 E. FOURTH ST.
ST. PAUL
651-797-2571

www.mmaa.org

Who knew, seven years ago, that today the Minnesota Museum of American Art (MMAA) would not only still be in operation, but thriving? In 2009, Kristin Makholm took the helm as executive director of the museum after it had been closed for a year and a half, its future precarious. Under Makholm's leadership, the MMAA opened its Project Space in the Pioneer-Endicott building in 2012. The space has since been home to a series of excellent shows under the curatorship of Christina Chang and then Christopher Atkins, who MMAA nabbed from the Minneapolis Institute of Art's MAEP Galleries. Besides exhibitions in the Project Space — which have included solo shows, like the imaginative "Coyote Dreams" featuring Julie Buffalohead, and the ambitious "American Art: It's Complicated" — MMAA has also launched touring shows such as the profound showing of George Morrison's art. Whatever the future holds for the museum, we feel confident they'll continue to put together engaging, thought-provoking shows celebrating Minnesota's breadth of artistic talent.

Readers' Choice: Minneapolis Institute of Art

BEST MUSEUM EXHIBITION

"America's Monsters, Superheroes, and Villains" at the Goldstein Museum of Design

1985 BUFORD AVE.
ST. PAUL
612-624-7434

www.goldstein.design.umn.edu

Geeking out, even attending the opening reception in full costume, was encouraged during this celebration of Minneapolis toy collector David Barnhill's impressive assemblage of pop-culture icons. Wonder Woman was in attendance (the miniature plastic-doll version, as well as a costumed

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enthusiast in the flesh), along with an array of toys such as the villainous Rat Fink (driving a hot rod, no less), *Star Wars* figurines, an assortment of aliens, and comic-book heroes from DC and Marvel — some in their original packaging. Co-curated by Barnhill, who has been collecting since the 1960s, and fellow enthusiast Stephen Rueff, the exhibition appealed to the kid in all of us. Wide-eyed visitors of all ages could be heard exuberantly exclaiming, "Wow!" "Whoa!" "Look at that!" At the same time, the objects presented also provided trenchant commentary on the role and portrayal of women, the Cold War and the arms race, and the rapid acceleration of scientific discovery in the mid-20th century. Toy design and manufacturing techniques were also presented and discussed via the 400-plus pieces in the exhibit, all of which came from Barnhill's personal collection, which contains some 200,000 toys and counting. Minds were blown. Intellects were engaged.

BEST INSTAGRAM

@CaptureMinnesota

www.instagram.com/captureminnesota

The only thing Minnesotans love more than talking about the weather is photographing it. Minnesota's largest Instagram community, @captureminnesota, scans all those breathtaking pics from around the state and reposts them daily to its 86k followers. From the frozen Lake Superior shore to Mia's marble columns lit up at night to a State Fair pronto pup swirled with mustard, every type of iconic image of the Land of 10,000 Lakes is on display here. The Instagram is a great way to explore the parts of the state you haven't seen yet, and to remind you of how stunning our surroundings can be — even in subzero temps, sweltering humidity, and everything in between. Have an Instagram pic you think is feature-worthy? Simply tag it #CaptureMn or #CaptureMinnesota.

Readers' Choice: @eatdrinkdishmpls

BEST ART CONTROVERSY

The Bob Dylan Mural

15 S. FIFTH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS

Last year, a five-story mural was created on a downtown building at the corner of Fifth Street and Hennepin Avenue. The piece, which pays homage to the life of Bob Dylan, was designed by Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra, who also enlisted the help of local muralists Erin Sayer and Yuya Negishi. As soon as it went up, debates began over social media concerning its very existence. "Why Bob Dylan? What has he done for the Twin Cities lately?" some asked. "Why isn't there a mural for Prince?" inquired others. "Is this my tax dollars at work?" others wondered. (No, this is not your tax dollars at work. The project was privately funded.) While some continue to question the validity of the mural, the whole scandal felt like a tempest in a teapot. The three faces of Bob Dylan will be looming above commuters indefinitely. Twin Citians will continue to take pride in Bob Dylan. And despite the negativity of some, many locals think the mural is pretty darn awesome.

BEST PUBLIC ART

Urban Flower Field (Amanda Lovelee)

PEDRO PARK, AT 10TH AND ROBERT STREETS
ST. PAUL

www.publicartstpaul.com/urban

There's a lot more to this project than simply a vibrant, nautilus-like design on a wall, paths curving into a similar pattern between flower beds, and some big red chairs. In creating the Urban Flower Field in Pedro Park near Lowertown in St. Paul, Amanda Lovelee designed an outdoor living room for the neighborhood and its visitors. On summer nights, residents can be seen enjoying takeout from nearby restaurants, a glass of wine brought down from their apartment across the street, or just each other's company. But this public art project is also a science project. University of St. Thomas researchers regularly test the 96 biodiverse flower plots to see whether the flora is extracting toxic substances from the urban soil. And the plots are actually arranged in a shape representing the golden mean, which in philosophy designates balance or the desirable middle between excess and deficiency. Lovelee, Public Art St. Paul's artist-in-residence, didn't do it alone. The creative team includes Adam Kay, director of environmental science, University of St. Thomas; muralists Ed Charbonneau and Jeremy Szopinski; Don Ganje and Bianca Paz of St. Paul Parks and Recreation; and agroecologist Paula Westmoreland of Ecological Design.

BEST THEATER TROUPE

Transatlantic Love Affair

www.transatlanticloveaffair.org

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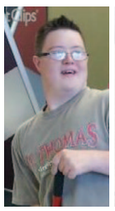

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It's that they then work as a unit for the staging. There are no sets or props at a TLA show. The actors create all of that on their own. Do you need a door? A couple of performers not in the current scene can make that, complete with a "creeeeeaaak" as it is opened and closed. It's more than something fun to watch. By using only their bodies and voices (usually joined by an onstage musician), they ensure that all of our focus goes to the performers — and the story they are trying to tell. Company masterminds Isabel Nelson and Diogo Lopes guide TLA with sure hands, telling unusual and unique stories (2015 included a blood-drenched Prohibition tale and a modern-riff on *Eurydice*) that are as moving as they are brilliant.

BEST THEATER

Dark & Stormy Productions

77 13TH AVE. NE, STUDIO 202
MINNEAPOLIS
612-401-4506
www.darkstormy.org

Considering that the Twin Cities is packed with larger, long-established companies, how did tiny upstart Dark & Stormy take the prize? It happened through the dedication of a handful of talented and committed artists who want the very best on stage. Last year, that meant a pair of shows by playwright William Mastrosimone. The first, *Extremities*, showcased how to do small-scale, in-your-face theater. At the company's tiny space in northeast Minneapolis, the play's tight confines only upped the tension in a story about rape and revenge. After that, most companies would have been locked into their next show. The flexible folks here instead were able to program another Mastrosimone play, *Sunshine*. The intimate setting remained, which allowed the audience to really ride along with the actors. Artistic director Sara Marsh has, over the course of a few years, crafted a must-attend company out of a simple desire to put on great shows with great acting.

Readers' Choice: Guthrie Theater

BEST PLAY

An Octoroon

Mixed Blood Theatre is never shy about prodding and provoking the audience, as it often dives head-first into issues of race, inclusion, and power. Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' play burns with nuclear heat, as he digs into American race relations through a 19th-century melodrama about slavery. The presentation made for an uncomfortable evening, as it featured a white actor in red face, a Latino in black face, and a black actor wearing white face. The crude racial politics of the original (considered quite progressive for the 1850s) forced the audience to confront just how far the nation has come over recent decades. None of this would have worked without a tip-top cast, led by William Hodgson playing both a version of Jacobs-Jenkins and the "heroic" white lead in the melodrama. It made your blood boil to watch, but also got stuck in the brain for weeks, hell, months, after the run had ended.

BEST MUSICAL

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Oh, did Theatre Latte Da hit a bloody home run with *Sweeney Todd*. It's not like they didn't have great material to work with — the Stephen Sondheim/Hugh Wheeler musical has been lauded for decades — but director Peter Rothstein brought his own distinct touch by putting performers better known for their acting than their singing in the two lead roles. It worked wonders, as Mark Benninghofen (the murderous barber) and Sally Wingert (his cannibalistic partner in crime) brought a rough reality rarely seen in the show. It didn't stop there, as set designer Kate Sutton-Johnson crafted a rusting, rotting London for all the actors to play out all of these dark deeds. In the end, Latte Da offered us a best-of-the-decade creation.

BEST DIRECTOR

James Napoleon Stone

James Napoleon Stone and Theatre Coup d'Etat have never backed away from a theatrical challenge, and they took on a big one with Peter Shaffer's *Equus*. It's a work with epic scope, incredibly intense characters, and an old mythic take on violence. That made for a heady brew when director Stone took the show to a tiny St. Paul stage. *Equus* centers on a disturbed young man who has mutilated a prized horse. He matches wits with a psychiatrist who attempts to cure him, but eventually begins to doubt his task — and even his choice of career. Stone marshalled and controlled all of these thoughts and emotions, and kept the production at just the right temperature. It blazed with insight and intensity without burning up.

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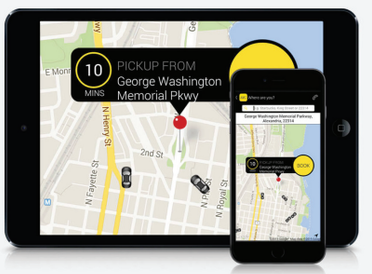

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BEST ACTOR

Adam Whisner

Playing a monster — a strong, well-rounded monster that you understand as you are repelled — is a tough task. Plenty of actors are content to chew the scenery, scream about how evil they are, and call it a day. Adam Whisner didn't take the easy way out when he played the lead in Theatre Pro Rata's *The Woodsman*. His character was a real monster: a child molester recently out of prison who still feels the old urges. Whisner (aided by Steven Fechter's tight script and Eric Hoover's deft direction) forced us to understand what made this man tick, whether we wanted to or not. This isn't a one-time triumph for Whisner. Earlier in the year, he tackled Will, a conflicted evangelical Christian toiling away at a craft store, in Loudmouth Collective's *A Bright New Boise*. Here was someone most people in the audience thought of as the "other" — and one whose views they most likely did not agree with — but Whisner still connected us to his character.

BEST ACTRESS

Regina Maria Williams

Regina Marie Williams is great in everything she does, whether belting out tunes at the Dakota Jazz Club or treading the boards in the likes of *The Color Purple, Othello*, or *Ruined*. Williams, at Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, pushed over the top with one of the most electrifying performances seen on any stage in the last year. *Sister Act* is a by-the-books modern musical, pretty much following the story of the Whoopi Goldberg film. It offered a terrific chance for a performer to take charge of a stage and never let go. Between a strong personality and even stronger pipes, Williams did just that as she kept the audience's focus like a magnet through every moment she was on the stage. Not only did it solidify her already lofty space in the local theater community, it introduced Williams to a whole new audience, who hopefully will follow her from the suburbs to the big city.

BEST EMERGING ACTRESS

Gracie Anderson

Gracie Anderson welcomes audiences to share whenever she is onstage. That was clear last year at the Bloomington Civic Theatre's (now known as Artistry) version of *Hairspray*. As Tracy Turnblad, Anderson needed to be the bright center of attention in the wild musical ride through 1960s Baltimore and the burgeoning Civil Rights movement. She did that with a strong singing voice and even stronger performance that mixed comedy with just the right amount of heart. She played another strong woman in Freshwater Theater's *Pioneer Suite*. There, she was a captivating Martha Dorsett, the first woman admitted to the Minnesota Bar. Her skills in these distinct roles mark Anderson as a performer to watch.

BEST EMERGING ACTOR

Kevin Fanshaw

For young performers, finding a high-profile starring role can be a challenge. That's particularly tough in the Twin Cities, with an ever-increasing cadre of talent that fights for the best parts. Kevin Fanshaw has quietly moved up the local chain, with character and featured roles on a variety of stages. Last fall, he got the chance to star in Theatre Coup d'Etat's *Equus*, and he didn't drop the ball. As crazed teenager Alan, Fanshaw exposed not just his full body in the play's famous nude scenes, but dug so deep into his character's broken psyche that it nearly hurt to watch. Yet it was impossible to turn away from any moment of the performance. That's how to make yourself known.

BEST SET DESIGN

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

The Children's Theatre Company's interpretation of Jules Verne's venerable tale was more a real-life video game than a staid performance. The audience was ushered through the bowels of CTC's building, playing a gang of ensigns assigned to raid the Nautilus and find out what Nemo was up to. The team of Jorge Cousineau (sets), Craig A. Gottschalk (lighting), and Sean Healey (sound) made sure the immersion never wavered. As the audience moved from location to location, the visual and auditory delights continued, whether in the packed study of a trapped scientist (complete with antique typewriter that had a bit of Verne's original book on the scrolled paper) or the overload of the finale on the Nautilus' bridge, where a sea monster attack provided a final shock.

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BEST COSTUME DESIGNER

Lynda L. Salsbury

A theatrical costume designer has a tough task. You want the work to be vibrant and distinct, but it also needs to match the tone and vision of the production. (Making the actors look good is in there somewhere as well.) Lynda L. Salsbury did all of that for the Ordway's *The Pirates of Penzance*. Director James Rocco moved the action to the Pacific Northwest, and Salsbury went right along, offering up a bevy of Mounties, pirates, maidens, and, of course, the very model of a modern Major-General. Those particular costumes were works of art, as they implied every bit of bluster, pride, and fussiness of the eloquent owner, right down to the epaulettes on his dressing gown. The whole production sounded great and looked great — and we give Salsbury plenty of credit for that.

BEST FASHION SHOW

LARK

Last September, twin brothers and clothing designers Tim and Thom Navarro of TIM+THOM organized a fashion show to close out the triumphant first go of Fashion Week MN. The chic audience arrived at the Minneapolis Club for an intimate evening highlighting new fashions from four local designers. The brothers presented their latest collection, which featured black-and-white designs ranging from striking slacks to cinched summer dresses. Samantha Rei shared her new feminine pieces inspired by the Depression-era South. Metallic garments by Shaider Vue were also on display. While many fashion shows do a great job hosting larger lineups, details can get lost or overwhelmed when you try to fit over a dozen clothing lines into a single show. With a thoughtful lineup limited to three designers, LARK was a runway party of a different breed. It kept things curated and simple, and attendees were able to bask in the finer elements and elegant touches of each piece.

Readers' Choice: I AM MPLS!

BEST LOCAL FASHION DESIGNER

Kathryn Sterner Sieve of Winsome

www.winsomegoods.com

It's not every day that a designer quits her day job at Target, plunges head-first into building her own business, and finds herself not only succeeding but about to take her brand to the next level. That's what Kathryn Sterner Sieve, founder of Winsome, has done, and she's doing it spectacularly. Since 2014, Sterner Sieve has specialized in minimal, modern, and limited-edition threads like women's jumpsuits, vinyl tanks, crop tops, and midi dresses. Initially working out of a northeast Minneapolis studio, this subtle trendsetter is currently converting a 1975 Airstream into a studio on wheels that will allow her to take operations around the country to partner with boutiques and bloggers on pop-up shops. How did this happen? With a little help from Kickstarter. Sterner Sieve raised an impressive $21k (and change) in only a month on the crowd-funding site, gifting her 234 backers with Winsome's curated goods like her "Well, Shit." tote bags, vinyl wallets, and suede clutches. Next stop? World domination.

Readers' Choice: Samantha Rei

BEST-DRESSED LADY

Erin Duffey

www.instagram.com/hornedbookworm

No one would dispute that fashion is a form of expression. But Erin Duffey of St. Paul does more than make a statement with her clothes; she photographs them and tells stories about each outfit. Scan Duffey's Instagram and you'll find characters like "Linda," the Subaru-driving German shepherd-lover who pairs an open-front cardigan with skinny jeans and ankle boots. There's also "Adrienne," who prefers an oversized sweater with three-quarter sleeves; slim, black ankle pants; and white Converse All-Stars. Or maybe you'll happen upon "Elaine," the framing studio owner who rocks a chunky sweater, crisp white blouse, cropped jeans, and clog boots. As herself, this senior specialist copywriter for Target wows in everything from turtlenecks to denim button-ups to little black dresses draped just-so over her graceful frame. Duffey's accessorizing is minimal, but who needs accessories with those exquisite cheekbones and impeccable eyebrows? Envious yet?

BEST-DRESSED DUDE

Zach LaVine

www.twitter.com/ZachLaVine

On the court, Zach LaVine has been one of the most exciting things to happen to Timberwolves basketball in years. But did you see his kicks? His Nike Hyperdunk 15 Lows made him look like he was literally on fire, straight out of the NBA Jam video game.

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Pair this up with the authentic *Space Jam*-inspired "Tune Squad" jersey he sported during last year's dunk contest, and his on-court style is just as ill as his on-court ability. What may be most impressive, however, is that in an era where players are wearing the loudest, most obnoxious shit for attention (just google Russell Westbrook if you need more proof), LaVine keeps it clean in three-piece suits at postgame pressers, or adds unique but not tacky accessories to a casual-night-out look. A quick scroll through his Instagram (zachlavine8) shows off next-level style, which landed him a spot in last year's GQ Style Wars for charity. He may be one of the youngest players in the league, but his combination of class, cash, and flash shows that he's fashion-savvy beyond his years.

BEST STRIP CLUB

The Seville Club

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www.thesevilleclub.com

Gentleman's clubs often like to describe themselves as upscale in order to sell expensive champagne and make their patrons feel distinguished when the entertainment's anything but that. The Seville Club legitimately cultivates an atmosphere of luxury and hospitality. Performers evoke elegance and style — not sleaze — while cocktails and amusements (unlike standard strip clubs' tonic with a splash of gin) are on par with the downtown's rigorous craft-cocktail scene. At the Seville, the stripper pole is neither present nor required, and the club allows its entertainers to keep all tips while other most establishments collect as much as 30 percent for the opportunity to get on stage. This only seems fair, and cultivates live entertainment that is both glamorous and engaging. Patronized by women nearly as frequently as men, the Seville is a superb alternative to regular late-nightlife, dressed in an old-world classic style without the pretense. No, they don't have a free-hot dog bar, but for truly adult entertainment, the Seville Club remains unprecedented.

Readers' Choice: The Seville Club

BEST CHOREOGRAPHER

Morgan Thorson

Morgan Thorson's *Still Life*, part of the "Local Time" exhibition on view at the Weisman Art Museum last summer, took a rotating cast of 19 dancers through several five-hour marathons. Observers had the freedom to come and go, sit in chairs around the perimeter, or just catch a glimpse from the gallery entrance. Part installation, part ordeal, part meditation on time, decay, and extinction, *Still Life*

created a world in which carefully detailed dance figures tumbled into something else entirely. Abstract formality mingled shamelessly with pedestrian moves as somber processions got tangled up through space, or dancers flipped out of dramatic poses with a "we're-done-here" attitude. The excellent performers became looser and more courageous as they coped with fatigue. Thorson built suspense, interwove calibrated dance with serious fun, and gave urgent animation to the still life of a museum.

BEST DANCE PERFORMANCE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

Nutcracker (not so) Suite

Myron Johnson's revitalized *Nutcracker (not so) Suite* marked his return to the stage as both performer and choreographer, along with dancers from the James Sewell Ballet and Johnson's Ballet of the Dolls. The outré plot, set in 1950s New York, sent Little Marie from her fancy Upper East Side apartment to a Lower East Side stew of drugs and brothels. Luxuriant false-eyelash winks at traditional *Nutcracker* tropes included Stephanie Fellner's rapacious Rat Queen played as the madam of a bordello, along with her menacing squad of Beatniks. Johnson camped it up as the funny uncle who gives Marie the gift of a Barbie and Ken doll (Jordan Lefton and Kelly Vittetoe in drolly robotic performances). Deanna Gooding as Marie combined sweet innocence with virtuosic dancing, while JBS operations manager Mary Jo Peloquin played an exasperated maid with extra-dry comic timing. Everyone onstage appeared to be having as good a time as the audience, especially Kevin McCormick, who wrapped the warped and hilarious narcissism of Marie's mom Flo in haute couture drag.

BEST DANCER

Erin Thompson

A mature dancer with an ample and varied expressive palette, Erin Thompson infused Joanie Smith's Tableaux Vivant, a tribute to suffragettes and female icons of the early 20th century, with heroic vigor and sly sensuality. Through shifting characterizations of women including flappers, mothers, and militant feminists, Thompson charged each gesture with fluid intensity. Movement purled through her lithe body as she imbued the period dances and behaviors suggested in Smith's vignettes with swing, sass, and rhythmic panache. Part of an excellent ensemble of dancers ages 22 to 75, Thompson captured the eternal feminine in subtly detailed motion.

BEST TV STATION

TPT

www.tpt.org

Programming. Programming. Programming. This isn't simply television. It's a quality of life enhancement. Last year, the Twin Cities' PBS affiliate was the highest-rated local public television service in the nation for the fourth year in a row — for good reason. TV doesn't always have to be mental potato chips. Shows like *Spies Beneath Berlin*, the true story of a hush-hush mission to build a tunnel into the Soviet sector of the city, remind us that learning can be a blast. Why won't your sister answer her cell? Oh yeah: *Downton Abbey* is on. TPT's lineup includes top-notch kids' shows like *Sesame Street* and *Word Girl*. Its programs have earned nationwide acclaim, including Peabody awards and Emmys. The people are paying attention. Almost two million viewers tune in monthly. But remember: Great TV doesn't come free. It's member supported. Perhaps this is the year to show some love.

Readers' Choice: KARE-TV (Channel 11)

BEST TV WEATHERPERSON

Kylie Bearse

www.minnesota.cbslocal.com

Mother Nature baptized WCCO's Kylie Bearse a weatherperson. The Minnesota native, born in the throes of a snowstorm, serves as the cohost and forecaster on Channel 4's *MidMorning* show. A combination of Michele Tafoya's solid, on-

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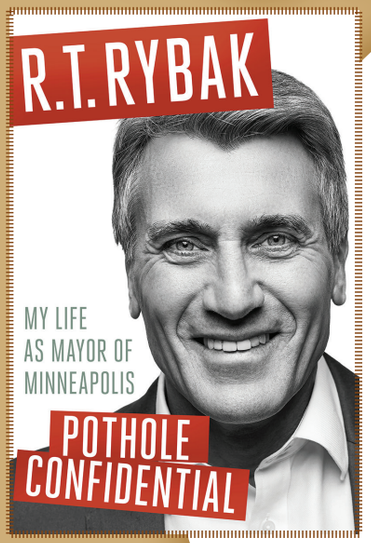

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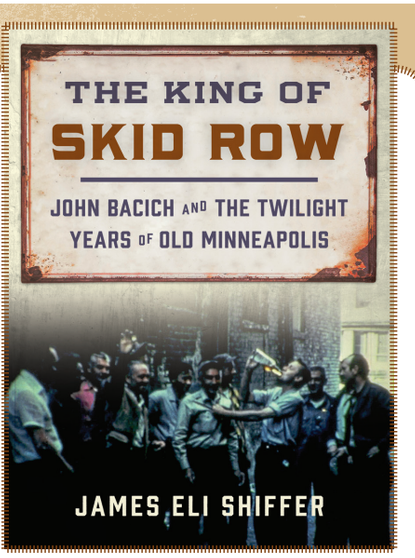

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SATURDAY, MAY 14

THE BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE
MAGIC CASTLES
$20/8PM/18+

FRIDAY, MAY 20

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 25

89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
THE KILLS
L.A. WITCH
$30/7:30PM/18+

THURSDAY, MAY 26

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CHARLES BRADLEY AND HIS EXTRAORDINAIRES
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SATURDAY, MAY 28

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GRIEVES, DEM ATLAS,
DJ ABILITIES, KEVIN ABSTRACT, SARAH WHITE, NAZEEM & SPENCER JOLES, DJ ADATRAK, HOSTED BY MR. PETER PARKER
$20/7PM/18+

SUNDAY, MAY 29

SOUND SET 2016 — OFFICIAL AFTER PARTY
RHYMESAYERS AND GET CRYPHY PRESENT
QUESTLOVE, GET CRYPHY
(PLAIN OLE BILL, DJ FUNDO, LAST WORD, AND JIMMY 2 TIMES) WITH BUTTA 45 DJS, HOSTED BY BROTHER ALI
$15/10PM/18+

FRIDAY, JUNE 3

OH WONDER
LANY
$20/8PM/18+

TUESDAY, JUNE 7

TYLER, THE CREATOR
TACO
$30/6PM/ALL AGES

FRIDAY, JUNE 10

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ROCK FOR PUSSY XII
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JOHN ELLER (THE SHINY LIGHTS)
DJ JAKE RUDH
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MONDAY, JUNE 13

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THE LEVEL UP TOUR
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TUESDAY, JUNE 14

YUNG LEAN
(RESCHEDULED FROM 3/27)
$21/6PM/ALL AGES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

CATFISH AND THE BOTTLEMEN
$20/$25/7PM/18+

SATURDAY, JUNE 18

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LOVE AS LAUGHTER
$22/$25/7PM/18+

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UNKNOWN HINSON
KOFFIN KATS
LINCOLN DURHAM
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- 9/17 THE SPECIALS *18+*
- 9/18 BELLY *18+*
- 10/09 BOYCE AVENUE BE SOMEBODY WORLD TOUR *ALL AGES*
- 10/30 AN EVENING WITH PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT, PERFORMING "SUBSTANCE" - JOY DIVISION & NEW ORDER *w/* DJ JAKE RUDH (OF TRANSMISSION) *18+*

7TH ST ENTRY

- 4/21 COMMUNION: TWIN CITIES *ft.* JAKUBI, WALKER LUKENS, CYN, AIDAN KNIGHT *18+*
- 4/22 GET CRYPHY (PLAIN OLE BILL, JIMMY 2 TIMES, LAST WORD, DJ FUNDO) *18+*
- 4/23 BLEACHED *w/* NO PARENTS, ROYAL BRAT *18+*
- 4/24 POLKADOT MAYHEM SWEET! '16 FT. ALLY MATTSON, HYDRAH, DEATHDANCE, BOTZY *18+*
- 4/25 FRANKIE COSMOS *w/* ESKIMEAUX, YOWLER *18+*
- 4/26 FAT WHITE FAMILY *and* DILLY DALLY *18+*
- 4/27 SUN CLUB *w/* THICK PAINT *18+*
- 4/28 UMPHREY'S MCGEE AFTERPARTY *ft.* PHO *w/* DOKS ROBOTIKS, CHALK *18+*
- 4/29 COASTS *w/* KNOX HAMILTON, SYMMETRY *18+*
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- 5/02 RONIIA, CROSS RECORD, MAGGIE MORRISON *18+*
- 5/03 CHRIS PUREKA *w/* ANNA VOGELZANG *18+*
- 5/05 THE SHIMMY FT. ELI THE PROFIT *w/* LEX ALLEN, SAINT LARON, TURNSTYL, DJ BVCKWOODS, SAVY *18+*
- 5/06 DAY WAVE *18+*
- 5/07 FOG 'FOR GOOD' RELEASE SHOW *w/* GREG GREASE, PSYMUN *18+*
- 5/08 KEEGAN WHITE *w/* TREVOR DEVINE AND THE IMMACULATE BEINGS, SHANNON KELLY *18+*
- 5/09 COUNT BASS D "INSTANTLY NEW TOUR" *w/* DILLON *18+*
- 5/10 JILLIAN RAE, JANELLE & THE GENTLEMEN, JULIA LUCILLE *18+*
- 5/11 RIPPER *and* MUUY BIIEN *w/* TREE BLOOD *18+*
- 5/12 SPICE "EMPOWER" EP RELEASE SHOW *w/* BLUE GREEN, NORTH STAR WISDOM, WILL ROBINSON, AND MORE *18+*
- 5/13 BLACK MOUNTAIN *w/* WHITE HILLS *18+*
- 5/14 DEAD LARRY *w/* MOBSTER LOBSTER (EP RELEASE SHOW), BASEMENT BREW *18+*
- 5/15 MIKE LOVE *w/* JACOB CHAMPLIN AND THE BLUE JAYS *18+*
- 5/16 GIVERS *w/* ANNA WISE *18+*
- 5/17 OLD MAN CANYON *18+*
- 5/19 COMMUNION: TWIN CITIES *ft.* BASECAMP, KIEV, BLUE HEALER *18+*
- 5/20 TINY MOVING PARTS *w/* PRAWN, FREE THROW *18+*
- 5/21 LA LUZ *w/* SICK SAD WORLD *18+*
- 5/23 THE OBSESSED, THE ATOMIC BITCHWAX, *and* KARMA TO BURN *18+*
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- 5/25 VÉRITÉ *w/* LOSTBOYCROW *18+*
- 5/26 ARBOR LABOR UNION *18+*
- 5/28 STEVE MOAKLER *w/* CAITLYN SMITH SHELLEY SKIDMORE, GREG BATES *18+*
- 5/31 WAX IDOLS *and* KING WOMAN *18+*
- 6/01 MUTUAL BENEFIT *w/* FLORIST, NOTHERN DARLING *18+*
- 6/03 PUP *w/* ROZWELL KID, CHARLY BLISS *18+*

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"I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING AND OTHER LIES....."
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$20/$25/7PM/ALL AGES

MONDAY, MAY 2
89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
WILD NOTHING
w/ WHITNEY
at the TRIPLE ROCK
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SATURDAY, MAY 7
CITY PAGES PRESENTS
LITTLE GREEN CARS AND **JOHN MARK NELSON**
at the CEDAR
$20/7PM/ALL AGES

TUESDAY, MAY 10
CATE LE BON
w/ MEGA BOG
at the THE CEDAR
$15/7PM/ALL AGES

THURSDAY, MAY 12
ELEPHANT REVIVAL
w/ DEAD HORSES
at the THE CEDAR
$18/$20/7PM/ALL AGES

THURSDAY, MAY 12
MARC BROUSSARD
w/ BABY BEE
at the FINE LINE
$20/$25/7:30PM/18+

FRIDAY, MAY 13
NADA SURF
w/ GOOD OLD WAR (ACOUSTIC)
at the FINE LINE
$20/8PM/18+

SATURDAY, MAY 21
89.3 THE CURRENT PRESENTS
SAVAGES
w/ HEAD WOUND CITY
at the FINE LINE
$22/8PM/18+

- 5/22 CHELSEA WOLFE *w/* A DEAD FOREST INDEX *at the Triple Rock*
- 5/28 MISSY HIGGINS *at the Fine Line*
- 6/03 BERNER: THE BEST THANG SMOKIN' TOUR *w/* KOOL JOHN, ANONYMOUS THAT DUDE *at the Fine Line*
- 6/04 GORDI *at Icehouse*
- 6/07 BRETT DENNEN *w/* FIREKID *at the Fine Line*
- 6/11 NOTHING *w/* WRONG, CULTURE ABUSE *at the Triple Rock*
- 6/17 JESSY LANZA *w/* DJ TAYE *at the Triple Rock*
- 6/18 EAGULLS *at the Triple Rock*
- 6/20 BLACK PISTOL FIRE *at the Triple Rock*
- 7/11 THE PAPER KITES *at the Triple Rock*
- 7/14 SWANS *w/* OKKYUNG LEE *at the Fine Line*
- 7/23 DR. DOG *w/* SHAKEY GRAVES *at Surly Brewing Festival Field*
- 7/31 WYE OAK *at the Fine Line*
- 8/06 WHITE LUNG *at the Triple Rock*
- 8/20 WILCO *w/* KURT VILE & THE VIOLATORS *at Historic Hall's Island*

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4/20 THE HOOD INTERNET W/ SHOWYOUSUCK, LASERS AND FAST AND SHIT 9PM
4/21 BOB MOULD #MICROSHOW 4PM
4/21 MINNEPSYCH FEST FT. FLAVOR CRYSTALS, THE CULT OF LIP, DEAD GURUS, PANTHER RAY, OAKS, AMERICAN CREAM, MAGNETIC GHOST 8PM
4/22 XTC: AN ALL STAR TRIBUTE SENSES WORKING OVERTIME IV 8PM
4/23 TUNES 'N TOONS W/ FLASHLIGHT VINYL (10AM-3PM/ALL AGES) NO COVER
4/23 THE DULUTH HOMEGROWN TWIN CITIES INVASION 2016 FT. THE HOBO NEPHEWS OF UNCLE FRANK, THE SOCIAL ANIMALS, SUPERIOR SIREN, AL CHURCH 8PM
4/24 OUTLAW BRUNCH W/ THE BOOTSTRAP FAMILY BAND (10AM-3PM/ALL AGES) NO COVER
4/26 WOODS W/ ULTIMATE PAINTING 7:30PM
4/27 JODI BEE BENEFIT W/ TOO FAST FOR THE DEVIL, DOSH, STOLYETTE, CLUSTERCUSS, PRAIRIE FIRE LADY CHOIR 7PM
4/28 J BOOG W/ WESTAFA, MAOLI 7:30PM
4/30 MATT ANDERSEN & THE BONA FIDE W/ LEE HARVEY OSMOND 8PM
5/01 JAZZ BRUNCH W/ THE BRYAN NICHOLS TRIO (10AM-3PM/ALL AGES) NO COVER
5/01 WHITE DENIM W/ SAM COHEN 7:30PM
5/03 THE BESNARD LAKES W/ JAILL, CHATHAM RISE 7:30PM
5/04 TALL HEIGHTS W/ LAULU 7PM
5/05 MILES NIELSEN & THE RUSTED HEARTS W/ FATHOM LANE, OLD DESERT ROAD 7:30PM
5/06 SERATONES W/ ELEGANZA!, THE CARNEGIES 8PM
5/07 JOEY RYAN & THE INKS W/ BBGUN, ERIC MAYSON 8PM
5/08 OUTLAW BRUNCH W/ DJ JEN HUGHES (10AM-3PM/ALL AGES) NO COVER
5/11 WHITEHORSE 7:30PM
5/12 THE NEW GRANADAS EP RELEASE SHOW W/ LITTLE MAN, SLEEP STUDY 7PM

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FIRST AVENUE 89.3 THE CURRENT

camera sensibility and Mary Tyler Moore's girl-next-door approachability, Bearse is the sunshine on a January day with a high temperature of minus two. Most folks talk weather because it's an easy conversation topic. Bearse delivers the forecast with a passion.

BEST TV NEWSCASTER

Randy Shaver

www.kare11.com

Randy Shaver's affable, vanilla mug has been a fixture on local television longer than most millennials have been alive. The longtime sports reporter-turned-KARE 11 anchor is a dad-type you don't want to rebel against when he tells you cigarettes are bad. He's the rare TV newsman whose congeniality doesn't feel like an act — a guy you could listen to read the news or set a tee time with and talk about the time he kicked cancer's ass. Furthering the paternal vibe, Shaver's kid scored a gig following in his old man's footsteps as a sports reporter with the station.

Readers' Choice: Amelia Santaniello

BEST VIRAL VIDEO

Bruce Springsteen dances with 91-year-old fan

Bruce Springsteen is still a hunk. At age 66, the New Jersey native can sing the hits for three hours nonstop, and has retained arms as muscular as the imagery in his lyrics. If he weren't happily married, Bruce would still get his pick of the ladies at closing time. That's why it's so great that Springsteen picked 91-year-old St. Paul native Jeanne Heintz to join him onstage at his Xcel Energy Center concert. Heintz got to play the role of Courtney Cox, dancing with the Boss during a rendition of "Dancin' in the Dark." It turned out the whole thing was a setup: Springsteen and Heintz were actually rekindling a spark that they'd had since 2009, when the then-84-year-old boogied with Bruce in Iowa. She's been to more than 100 of his shows with her daughter. Now you know why.

BEST COLUMNIST

Jon Tevlin

www.startribune.com

In an age when pundits tend to bray with alternating jolts of outrage and sanctimony, waxing sociological from a vantage point of 10,000 feet above the action, the Star Tribune's Jon Tevlin is a rare species: the last of the shoe-leather columnists. His gift is seeing the broader implications of life through the triumphs and tragedies of regular people. Be it the blunt obituary written by the sister of a suicide victim, or the tale of a middle-aged man who was randomly punched in the face at the St. Patrick's Day parade, Tevlin writes stories of poignant intimacy that bring the harrumphing on modern media so much closer to the ground, where every reader can empathize.

BEST TWEETER

Gigi Berry (@_omgigi_)

www.twitter.com/_omgigi_

The real-life Gourgous "Gigi" Berry (yes, that's the correct spelling) is an avalanche of personality in a frozen landscape of Minnesota passivity, which makes sense, considering the witty chicken-nugget devotee is originally from Georgia. Gigi quickly won over her adoptive state's Twitter scene with her infectious gusto for Prince, *The Simpsons*, and beards. While her tolerance for Northeast soul-food destination Brasa is high, her tolerance for B.S. is low — and she's not shy about letting you know that. The iconic — to borrow her go-to descriptor — queen of Twin Cities tweets briefly returned home to Georgiaa for major surgery, and the outpouring of online love she received from Minnesota IP addresses was remarkable. It's further proof we're all #blessed to have a force like Gigi in our feeds and in our lives, TBH.

BEST LOCAL COMMERCIAL

Fancy Ray for Taco Bell

The Vikings didn't make Super Bowl 50, but Viking metal does in this unexpected commercial from Treehouse Records and fast-food behemoth Taco Bell. In the Age of Locally Made — whether that means beer or soap or your kid's scarf — people want something they connect with, which has left the chains scrambling. But what happens when national and neighborhood come together in the least expected place? Anyone still paying attention after Cam Newton's collapse began was surprised to see the enigmatic Fancy Ray turn up in a Super Bowl ad. When the curly-haired pitchman pulls a quesalupa from a Taco Bell record sleeve, the message is delivered with delicious absurdity: dusty old records gone greasy drive-thru, from Lyndale Avenue to every highway in the state.

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BEST CASINO

Black Bear Casino Resort

1785 HWY. 210
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www.blackbearcasinoresort.com

Minnesota owns its share of elaborate, Vegas-style casinos — Treasure Island, Mystic Lake, and Grand Casino Hinckley, to name a few. But when you're a modest gambler of modest means — as most of us are — there's no better than Black Bear, located just off I-35 on your way to Duluth. It offers the simple charms of a Native casino in the countryside, sans the jostling crowds. There's blackjack, poker, bingo, and slots ranging in all denominations. There's the requisite feasting at the steakhouse or the buffet. There's even entertainment like cage fighting and songstresses from yesteryear, like Pat Benatar. And you can save a pile of loot on your next trip to the North Shore while pretending you're a card-carrying member of the 1 percent: Even the hotel's jacuzzi suites come in at less than $100. Because while you may be of humble purse, you don't always have to live that way.

Readers' Choice: Mystic Lake

BEST LOCAL WEBSITE

MinnPost

www.minnpost.com

MinnPost is the antidote for those who believe the internet has wrestled their IQ to depths beyond repair. This is a site for the high-minded and civically engaged, people who want to read about the big issues affecting Minnesota. It skips the low-hanging fruit of the daily news cycle to analyze the greater significance of politics, development, health care, the environment and the like. Think of it as the Twin Cities' version of the PBS *NewsHour* — a meal heavy on the meat, but without a lot of sizzle. Throw in Britt Robson's superior sports reporting, Brian Lambert's morning roundup, and perhaps the most enlightened, goober-free comment section in town, and you have all the makings of a balanced, nutritious breakfast.

BEST LOCAL FACEBOOK PAGE

Black Lives Matter Minneapolis

www.facebook.com/blacklivesmatterminneapolis

Love 'em or hate 'em, it's hard to discount the power of Black Lives Matter's Minneapolis chapter. In just a short time, it's brought scrutiny to racial disparities in policing, changed the way Hennepin County deals with officer-involved shootings, and moved the governor to put real money behind changing Minnesota's embarrassing discrepancies in black-white prosperity. With 40,000 followers, Black Lives' Facebook page has become the go-to site for the state's discussion on all matters race, generating thousands of comments. While the discourse isn't always pretty, it isn't supposed to be. The simple fact that people are convening to talk is the first step forward.

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Minnesota Clinical Study Center

Steve Kempers, MD
The Minnesota Clinical Study Center

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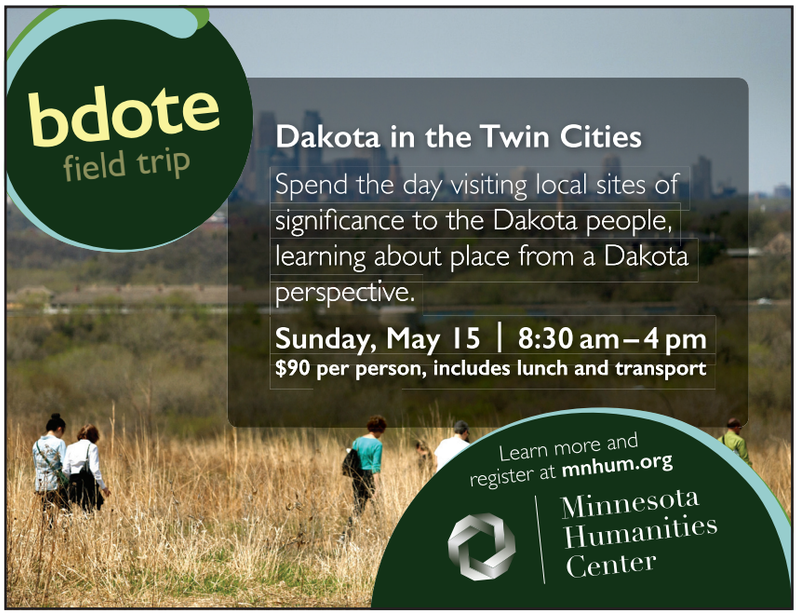
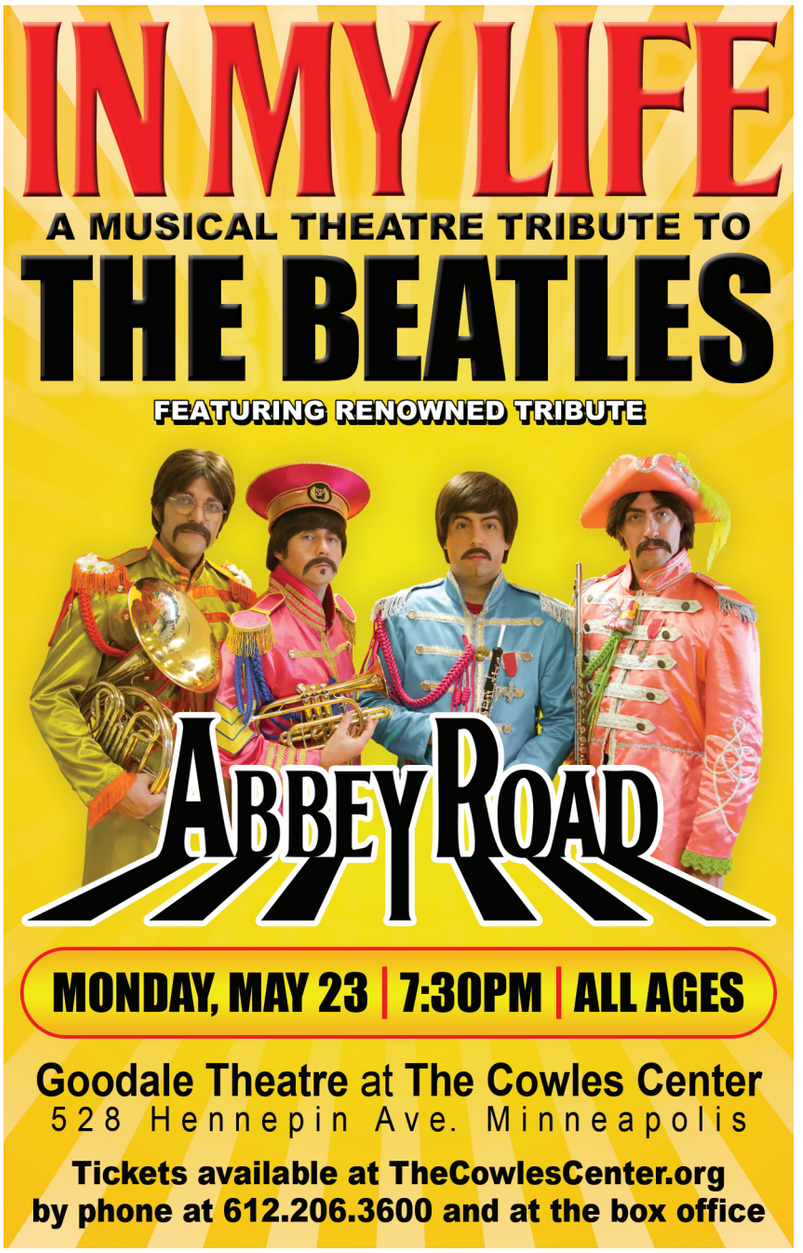




BEST LINGERIE STORE

Room No. 3

4948 FRANCE AVE. S.
EDINA
952-746-3003

www.roomno3.com

For some, it's the frilly things in life that bring joy. At Room No. 3, you have plenty to choose from. The lingerie and lounge-wear boutique offers a delightful mix of items, whether you're shopping for super comfy pajamas to fight off the January chill or are in search of something a little naughty for a hot date. Here you'll find lacy bralettes, curve-supporting balconette bras, ass-baring thongs, old-school silk drawers, and slips ranging from practical to freakin' sexy. Brands include Mimi Holliday, Stella McCartney, and eberjey. They also carry cashmere in the form of posh sweaters and warm scarves, and have recently added swimwear.

Readers' Choice: Flirt Boutique

BEST BOUTIQUE

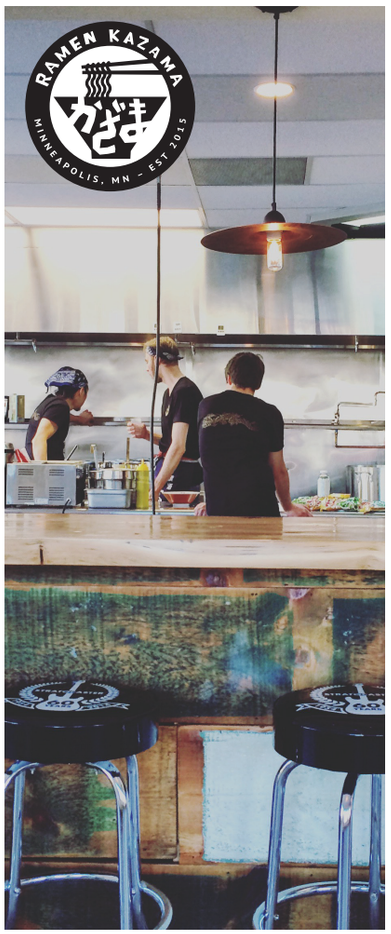
Covered Uptown

1201 LAGOON AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-825-1610

www.instagram.com/covereduptown

Whether you're a hard-core fashionista, a denim fanatic, or someone who just wants to look good, Covered Uptown has your back. The boutique's inventory includes designer jean brands (Hudson, Blank, Elliot), basics with a bit of an edge, chunky shoes, and cozy sweaters that are on-trend but won't be out of style come next season. There are concert-inspired tees and sweaters celebrating Van Halen, Madonna, and Bowie; warm flannels; bags of every shape and size; comfy, lacy bralettes in shades ranging from neutral to neon; and bad-ass moto jackets. Whether your aesthetic is rocker chic, minimalist comfort, or fresh and sporty, chances are high that you will find something covetable here.

Readers' Choice: Primp



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APR 21 — **LUKE SMITH (singer/songwriter)** *5-7pm*
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APR 22 10:00PM — **ART CRAWL LAUNCH PARTY**
Join us for night 1 of the Saint Paul Art Crawl!
Live music from Hot Date, Late Century, Wastrels

APR 23 5:00PM — **CLAIMING THE NARRATIVE–ADVENTURES IN ARAB EXPERIMENTALISM**
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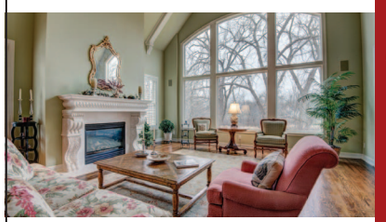

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BEST MALL

Midtown Global Market

920 E. LAKE ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-872-4041

www.midtownglobalmarket.org

There's a big mall in the suburbs that swallows traffic and arrests protesters. But in the city's heart on Lake Street, there's another that embraces community with live music, international flavors, chess tables, and even a brewery. It's obvious why the Midtown Global Market is a Twin Cities standout. From falafel to tacos to Korean fare to Hot Indian, there's a taste of everything, both literally and style-wise. While celebrating the diversity of the community, Global Market embraces culture instead of hocking cell phone cases and spritzing perfume on passersby.

BEST CLOTHING STORE (WOMEN)

Cliché

2403 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-870-0420

www.clichempls.com

As boutiques and other unique clothing stores continue to pop up around the Twin Cities, Cliché, the shop that more or less kicked off the renaissance, continues to flourish. The Wedge neighborhood destination offers a variety of clothes, jewelry, shoes, and bags from crucial wardrobe basics to quirky statement pieces. This winter the location was filled with cozy sweater dresses. This spring, the place is teeming with bright-yellow rain coats, '70s-style jeans, flowy maxi-dresses, and moccasins. Featured designers include local talents as well as folks you won't find anywhere else in town. Though Cliché is always a store, it frequently becomes an event center too, as the shop regularly hosts trunk shows, fashion-week parties, and industry nights.

BEST CLOTHING STORE (MEN)

Buffalo Exchange

2727 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-9115

www.buffaloexchange.com

The key to shopping at used clothing chain Buffalo Exchange is that you need a modicum of fashion knowledge or it's easy to get fleeced. Prices on the low-to-mid range inventory are embarrassingly close to market value for new items ($20 for a raggedy pair of Levi's — really?). But it's in the upper quality range that BuffEx really shines. Fifty smackers for a tags-still-on pair of Wolverine 1000 Mile boots (retail: $360)? Yes please! Mint-condition Pendleton fitted board shirt (retail: $125) for $25? Sign us up. You'll need to clamp down on your impulse buy instinct. Instead, come back often for short trips to check up on the newest additions, and only whip out the debit card when you know the quality's good and the discount is deep. Pay particular attention to the footwear department, where finding deals like spotless Clark's Wallabies for $30 (retail: $140) is common. For dudes who know the difference in price and quality between Mossimo and Brooks Brothers, there's no better place to score deals.

BEST PLACE TO BUY JEWELRY

Uniquely Yours

4305 UPTON AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-746-0508

www.uniquelyyourscustomjewelry.com

Listen to any local radio station during the day, and you'll likely hear an ad for one of the big-chain jewelry stores in town. But if you don't want to feel like you're buying jewelry off the rack, you've got to visit Uniquely Yours. Offering one-of-a-kind engagement rings, magnificent pendants, and eye-catching earrings, owner and designer Gregory Brassil creates pieces that you'll treasure for a lifetime. In addition to designing platinum, white gold, and palladium masterpieces, Brassil is also a master at repairing and restoring old jewelry, giving it the second life it so richly deserves. It's no surprise that the store has thrived for over 20 years in the Linden Hills neighborhood.

BEST SPA

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MINNEAPOLIS

www.spotspas.com

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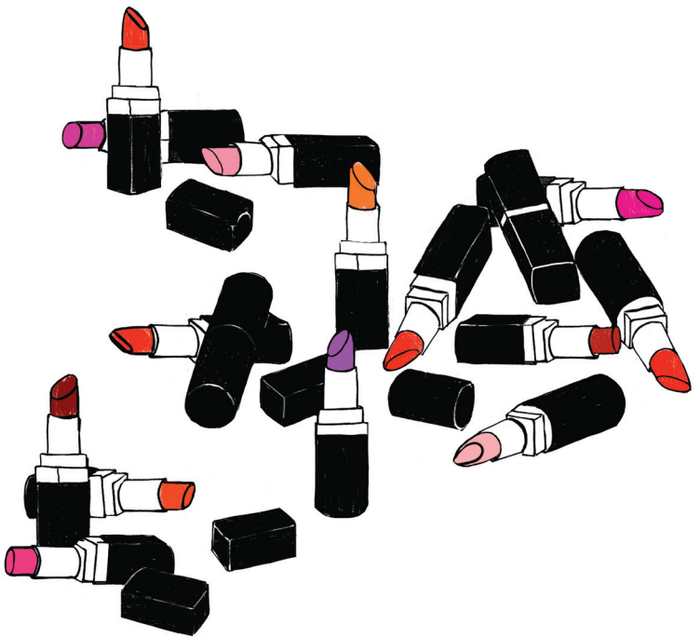

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Readers' Choice: Juut Salonspa

BEST PLACE TO BUY MAKEUP

Aromi

www.aromibeauty.com

For the ethical shopper, makeup is a product that comes with a lot of baggage. Fortunately, there are some businesses out there that give a damn, and Aromi is one of them. The company, founded by Hannah Follis, offers lipsticks, eyeshadows, perfumes, and colognes at a variety of Twin Cities locations (and quite a few outside the state as well). All products are vegan, cruelty-free, and made from Follis' preferred list of organic and raw materials in small batches by hand (kind of like homemade cookies). Aromi lipsticks and glosses are especially covetable, as they come in colors ranging from slick jewel tones to matte nudes. You can order them online, or shop for them in person at places like Ethique Nouveau, i like you, and Martin Patrick 3.

BEST HAIRCUT

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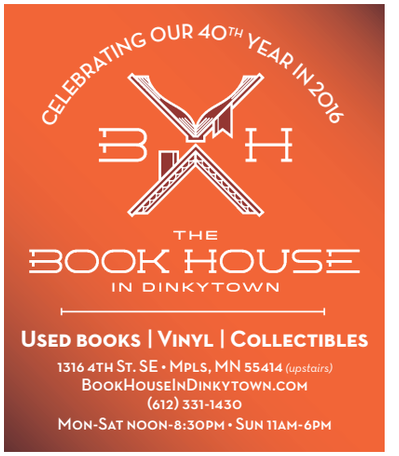
BEST HAIRSTYLE

The Man Bun

We here at City Pages would like to take a moment to defend one of the most reviled



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HERRINGBONE

A house made dessert crafted from our favorite breakfast cereals, melded together with a sweet, sugary blend of milk and whipped cream.

DE RIGUEUR

Rich, smooth peanut butter delicately blended into a thick, creamy vanilla gelato base and topped with savory melted caramel and butterscotch.

WINDSOR

A smooth, robust tobacco with notes of rich bavarian cream. Reminiscent of a classic cigar with a pleasantly sweet finish.

BESPOKE

Crisp, fresh lychee juice shaken with a combination of sweet peach and tangerine liqueurs. Finished with a freshly sliced mango garnish.

OXFORD

Fresh picked strawberries, sliced and baked into a decadent cinnamon danish dessert and drizzled with sweet cream frosting.

TUXX Elixirs can be found at these fine, local retailers & many more!

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5854 Blaine Avenue East
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076

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4329 Central Avenue NE
Columbia Heights, MN 55421

eCig Market
8413 W Broadway Ave.
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445

Vape Genius
17729 Kenwood Trail
Lakeville, MN 55044

eCig 101
14165 James Rd #116
Rogers, MN 55374

Mega Vapes
822 W St. Germain St.
St Cloud, MN 56301

eCig Clubhouse
13743 Aberdeen St NE
Ham Lake, MN 55304

Smoke Shop II
929 Wildwood Rd
White Bear Lake, MN 55115

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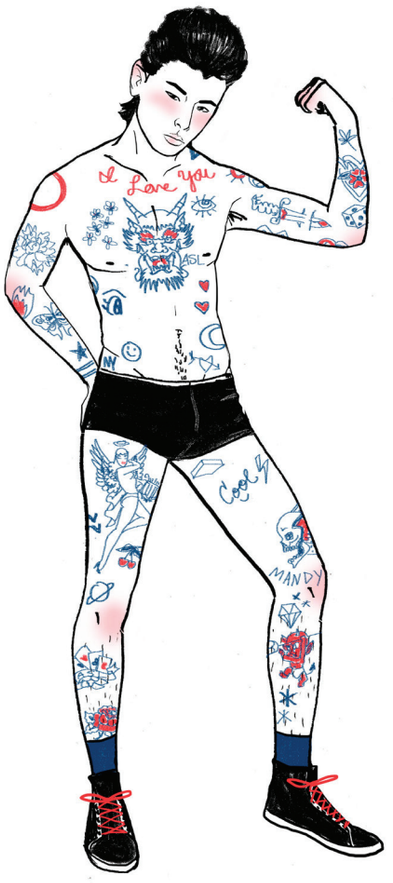

hairstyles in modern memory: the man bun. For centuries, women have enjoyed this versatile and practical hairstyle. Whether it's loosely coiled on top of the head or tightly wound in back, it's a no-nonsense look that frees a woman's face from stray hairs while she embarks on any number of important tasks. Then, with the flip of a bobby pin, her hair falls luxuriously on her shoulders when she's ready to kick back for the evening. Why shouldn't men with longer locks enjoy the same hair ease? Buns provide the best of both worlds: You get to keep your beautiful mane, but have a way to tuck it away when engaging in activities like snowboarding or needlepoint. Let's call the man bun hate what it is: fear of men expressing their femininity. So embrace the gender ambiguity of the future. Embrace the man bun.

BEST THRIFT STORE

Steeple People

2004 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-8305

Expert thrifters know that scoring life-altering deals means walking out of a store empty-handed more often than not. With most second-hand stores, the odds of finding something on any given day that you want, in a size that fits, that's in good condition, are slim to none. Returning often for short trips to check out new inventory is the way to play the game right. Nowhere in the Twin Cities is this easier than at Steeple People, an outreach ministry of the Hennepin United Methodist Church. The staff is friendly, the prices are stupid low, and the shop is cozy and conveniently located for the weekly visits of a dedicated picker. Best of all, the store's inventory is tiny but fierce, with things like Allen Edmonds footwear and J. Crew shirting all in as close to mint condition as you're likely to find second-hand in the Twin Cities.

Readers' Choice: Unique Thrift

BEST TATTOO PARLOR

Guns N' Needles Tattoo

2401 DUPONT AVE. S.
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612-998-5997

www.gunsnneedles.com

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enough to gently break the news that the design you had in mind may not be that cool in hindsight, see Guns N' Needles in Uptown. It's a referral-driven studio with a loyal customer base that believes the guys and lady perched on the foot pedal can do no wrong, and a penchant for relaxing curious new faces with offerings of free water and candy. The space is neat and comfortable, the artists professional listeners. Negative experiences are basically unheard of.

Readers' Choice: Leviticus Tattoo

BEST GIFT STORE

The Foundry

125 N. FIRST ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-333-8484

thefoundryhomegoods.com

If your first reaction entering this gift store is, "It smells amazing in here," you're not alone. If you then wander over wide-eyed to a luxurious woven towel from Japan before spying a well-mannered chocolate lab napping sweetly on her dog bed nearby, it's official: You've found the Foundry. This worldly gift shop in the North Loop gathers all things well made, from local beeswax candles (the source of that amazing scent) to Portuguese pottery. A selection of charming wooden children's toys offers gifts to last generations; a set of modern notebooks will send any college-bound kid off with a sense of purpose. And though some of this simple, beautiful craftsmanship can cost you a pretty penny, there are plenty of little trinkets and odds-and-ends to suit any occasion and budget. Scope out the little sale section, scoop up a deal, and pat Ruby (that gentle chocolate lab) on your way out the door. Or buy online from their website and get free shipping on purchases over $100.

Readers' Choice: Patina

BEST VINTAGE SHOP

Bearded Mermaid Bazaar

957 W. SEVENTH ST.
ST. PAUL
651-788-3645

Whether you're looking for a leather coat with fringe, a tastefully mounted animal head, one-of-a-kind furniture, or even a coffin (for decorative purposes, of course), chances are you'll find anything you can dream up at Bearded Mermaid. Conveniently located at the corner of West Seventh and James Streets in St. Paul, the shop offers a treasure trove of unusual, eye-catching, and occasionally terrifying

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decor, and is just as much an art exhibit as it is a place to shop for vintage clothes and accessories. A quick lap through the bazaar feels like a game of time-machine bumper cars, with decades-old aluminum beer signs sharing shelf space with antique Tonka toy trucks. Several generations' worth of furniture is interspersed throughout the store, each piece telling its own unique story. The constantly rotating selection of bizarre treasures and pop-culture artifacts guarantees that no two trips inside are ever the same. Much like the items in the shop, the Bearded Mermaid is truly one of a kind.

Readers' Choice: Junket: Tossed & Found

BEST PLACE TO BUY VINYL

Mill City Sound

812 MAINSTREET
HOPKINS
952-456-6547
www.millcitysound.com

The southwestern suburbs were in desperate need of a good record shop, and they certainly got that and then some when Mill City Sound opened its doors in late 2014. The shop is owned and operated by Rob Sheely, who has been an avid record collector since his teens, and that love shines through in the expert curation found in the stacks. Not only can you find the hottest new releases and gorgeously packaged vinyl box sets in ample supply on Mill City's shelves, but the affordable used bins are filled with an eclectic mix that will suit the tastes of any music fan. The shop is situated in an old pharmacy and hardware store on Mainstreet, which adds to the neighborhood charm of Mill City. The fact that there isn't another record shop like it for miles around is also part of its appeal, drawing music fans from all over the Twin Cities who make special pilgrimages to the store for whatever style of music they are craving. Sheely is continuously acquiring new collections from sellers, replenishing his already impressive stacks with classic gems as well as the best new LPs around.

Readers' Choice: Electric Fetus

BEST PLACE TO BUY FURNITURE

MidModMen+friends

2401 UNIVERSITY AVE.
ST. PAUL
612-234-1201
www.midmodmen.com

At last there's a store specializing in midcentury without the attitude, the stratospheric prices, or the minimalist décor. And in addition to offering cleaned, rejuvenated, and restored vintage and modern furniture, the gang loves color: Lighting, glassware, fabrics, and vibrant artwork and textiles by Lisa Rydin Erickson (who has become something of an artist-in-residence at MidModMen) come in a vivacious spectrum of oranges, reds, greens, and blues to enliven the clean, streamlined wood of the eclectic furnishings. The store is also a good neigh-

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Call: 612-626-7276
Email: easya@umn.edu
Visit: TobaccoResearch.umn.edu/easy-a

Do you smoke and use the Depo shot?

The University of Minnesota is conducting a new research study on the effects of hormones on short-term quit smoking efforts in women who are using Depo-Provera and want to quit smoking.

Participants are compensated for their time.

Call: 612-626-7276
Email: orcas@umn.edu
Visit: TobaccoResearch.umn.edu/orcasstudy

bor, holding frequent sales, celebrating its presence on the Green Line, welcoming new businesses to the community, and hosting events with Docomomo MN, a nonprofit that seeks to educate the public on and preserve modern architecture. MidModMen opened as a three-month retail experiment — a pop-up — three years ago, expanded next door for a bit, and contracted again when Workhorse Coffee moved in. Now, MidModMen+friends is a destination, restoring furniture while anchoring the revitalization of University Avenue at 280 into a hip new zone for creativity, community, and vintage collectibles.

BEST OUTDOORS STORE

Midwest Mountaineering

309 CEDAR AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-339-3433

www.midwestmtn.com

Do you want cookie-cutter and utility, or do you want curation and education in your shopping experience? The West Bank's Midwest Mountaineering has everything from staple camping gear to pamphlets and tip sheets on backpacking and kayaks. There's a supply of rock climbing equipment, as the name suggests, but also a room dedicated to paddle sports, another to clothing, plus a repair shop upstairs. The first adventure is finding parking (pro tip: They validate in the lot behind the store). Inventory varies with the seasons, with lightweight backpacks, waterproof supplies, and true hiking boots. Midwest Mountaineering looks unassuming from the outside, but inside the swinging front doors, it's a pathway to adventure and a sprawling celebration of the outdoors, be it by hammock or the hard way.

BEST GARDEN CENTER

Gertens

5500 BLAINE AVE. E.
INVER GROVE HEIGHTS
651-450-1501

www.gertens.com

Gertens is the IKEA of gardening: an expansive maze the size of an Air Force base. There are acres of trees, with everything from the standard maple to the truly exotic. There's shrubbery, plants, patio furniture, and decorative lawn and garden fixtures. Whether you're on the hunt for materials for a new retaining wall, or simply looking for new flower pots, Gertens has more than 100 acres of wares to choose from. The only thing missing is the meatballs.

BEST DOG DAYCARE

Dog Days

880 VANDALIA ST.
ST. PAUL
651-642-9663

www.dogdaysinc.com

You're a loving dog owner, aren't you? Placing your hound in a cell all day makes you feel like Stalin. Or worse, a ranking official in the Ted Cruz campaign. Dog Days provides a more compassionate alternative. It offers 14,000 square feet of free-range indoor romping, with additional space outdoors, plus another location near the state Capitol. Better yet, playtime is divided based on size and temperament. There are sections for the big boys to frolic, another for the little guys, and yet another with beds for chill beasts who want to just cool out and watch from the sidelines. Dog Days also provides grooming and training, plus daytime and overnight stays. Because when it comes to leaving your dog with a stranger, you

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1360 Lexington Ave N
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651.487.8046

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Minneapolis 55408
612.922.9226

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BEST PET STORE

PetSmart

EIGHT TWIN CITIES LOCATIONS

www.stores.petsmart.com

It's considered a sin in some circles to name a sprawling corporate behemoth the best of anything. But PetSmart defies this prejudice. Its warehouse-size stores offer one-stop shopping for birds, cats, fish, reptiles, and the most loveable species to ever walk this Earth, the mighty canine. Its wares range from everything from dental care to food, aquariums to bird feeders. There's also grooming, training, and doggy day camps. It's not uncommon to encounter a rotating selection of rescue animals waiting to permanently decamp in your home. Its charitable arm helps rescue 400,000 pets in North America each year, and 90 percent of what you donate goes directly to animal care, one of the highest ratios in the nonprofit world.

BEST HEAD SHOP

Hideaway

1309 FOURTH ST. SE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-331-1554

www.thehideawayonline.com

There's no way around it: The reigning king of all Twin Cities head shops can't be beat. Dinkytown's Hideaway is a holy apothecary of hookahs, hand pipes, water pipes, and other fully functional collectible glass art. Browsing this vast selection can be intimidating, but sales reps will kindly help just as long as you don't mention the prohibited plant that all this pretty hardware is best suited for. Technically, everything is "designed for tobacco products." Hideaway is also the flagship retailer of Stone Arch Studio's hand-blown MN Legit brand of glasswork. Buy local art, support sustainable stoners.

BEST SMOKE SHOP

Tobacco Tree

734 LEXINGTON AVE. N.
ROSEVILLE
651-489-4028

www.tobaccotreemn.com

You are a smoker, an aficionado of delicious American-made tobacco products chock-full of vitamins and nutrients. That means you're also among Minnesota's most sacrificial citizens. At a tax rate of $3.50 per pack, no one does more to keep this great state flush. And this in turn means you need a smoke source of competitive pricing and speed of purchase, lest you're delayed in getting to your six jobs to pay for it all. Enter the Tobacco Tree. Located at the scenic corner of Larpenteur and Lexington, it has all the essentials for the nicotine fiend on the go: cigars, cigs, loose leaf, hookahs, and more. It's a tiny, rail-thin shop. Certainly there are more elaborate joints to choose from. But the professional smoker does not need a selection of 78 different cigs from England. You need a pack of Camels, a Mountain Dew, an off-brand lighter. And you need it in 60 seconds or less. The Tobacco Tree understands this. For you are the engine of Minnesota's economy, and you must be free to roar, not stuck in line waiting behind some guy buying scratch-off tickets.

BEST VAPE SHOP

Smokeless Smoking

514 E. HENNEPIN AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-217-4550

www.smokelesssmoking.com

In a world where smoking is detested and buildings ban cigarettes and electronic cigarettes with equal prejudice, Smokeless Smoking is a lounge outfitted with free wi-fi and video games, where folks trying to quit tobacco can vape to their hearts' content. Making the transition from the cigarette to a chargeable, customizable e-cig can be a daunting learning curve, however, and the friendly clerks behind the juice bar feel your pain. They're bona fide experts who will hold your hand and explain how it all works as many times as you need to hear it. The website also carries a set of frank how-to videos. Part art gallery, mostly casual hang-out, Smokeless Smoking is a new business on the edge of dumping Philip Morris, run by much nicer guys who want you to quit worrying and love the cloud.

BEST ADULT STORE

Smitten Kitten

3010 LYNDALE AVE. S
MINNEAPOLIS
612-721-6088

www.smittenkittenonline.com

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cious, and works with your vegetarian diet? Wanna ask your girlfriend for a scissoring sesh on a Valentine's Day card? Smitten Kitten's got your back. This designer sex shop is part boutique, part health class, where the clerks just want to help you enjoy some awesome coitus without the risk of contracting anything unseemly or crossing important boundaries. Got a kink? Love porn? You don't have to feel like a freak about it, because there's an ethical way to do anything, and Smitten Kitten is all-inclusive and non-judgmental. All the toys are non-toxic and environmentally friendly.

BEST GAMING SHOP

Mead Hall Games and Comics

1425 LASALLE AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-315-3945

www.meadhallgames.com

A swinging pub sign and the slightly older crowd that lounges on the steps outside this corner shop in between Friday night Magic games makes it look like some hidden watering hole. But Mead Hall doesn't actually carry mead so much as indie board games, cards, comics, and vinyls. When it comes to atmosphere, Mead Hall roleplays as a dungeon, albeit a rather romantic one replete with beautiful long wooden tables, ye olde lantern lights, literal barrels full of games, and one suit of armor. There's even a social-media community for the Magic regulars, called the Meadery. Providing a home for competitive yet friendly card bros as well as old-fashioned comic lovers, the owners are readily willing to order anything that isn't already in stock, and facilitate pizza runs in the evenings.

Readers' Choice: Source Comics & Games

BEST COMIC BOOK STORE

Big Brain Comics

1027 S. WASHINGTON AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-338-4390

www.bigbraincomics.com

A household name for hardcore comic-lovers, this architecturally awesome storefront boasts shelves upon shelves of mainstream and indie comics, graphic novels, and 'zines. Michael Drivas is at the helm of this geek mecca. If you walk in expecting Minnesota Nice, you might have to look elsewhere. This is a what-you-see-is-what-you-get operation. Customer service is not its strong suit; selection is. Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, Manga, erotica — it's all here. You just have to find it. Because inventory is stacked spines-out, veteran shoppers recommend going with a list and allotting plenty of browsing time. Word on the street is that Big Brain will be closing this summer. Its legacy will live on, however, as it has already inspired a new generation of comic-book readers.

BEST BOOKSTORE (NEW)

Boneshaker Books

2002 23RD AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-7110

www.boneshakerbooks.com

Since 2011, Boneshaker Books has been a bright literary spot in the Seward neighborhood. Here you'll discover hard-to-find radical and progressive books and publications, a fun children's section, and great lit, all in a shop with a cozy neighborhood feel. The space is mostly volunteer-run and hosts a slew of happenings, including open work sessions and reading clubs like Cracked Walnut (short fiction) and the Twin Cities Queer Book Club. Another quirky (and practical) perk to this business: If you're local and you order a book online, it will be delivered via bike. The space is also home to the Women's Prison Book Project, which seeks to supply free reading materials for female/trans prison inmates.

Readers' Choice: Magers & Quinn Booksellers

BEST BOOKSTORE (USED)

Once Upon a Crime

604 W. 26TH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-870-3785

www.onceuponacrimebooks.com

Over the years, three generations of humble book lovers have run this basement murder-mystery shop with a wonderful sense of pun. Pat Frovarp and Gary Schulze, who first met and later married in Once Upon a Crime, managed the store together for 14 years in a sort of fairy tale variation on the theme. A sign on the door welcomes "plots with guns." The website is bullet-ridden with 1990s computer graphics that speak to the store's low-tech, pure-to-paper dedication. Still, the independent bookstore business is a quixotic undertaking these days, and in March Frovarp and Schulze passed the

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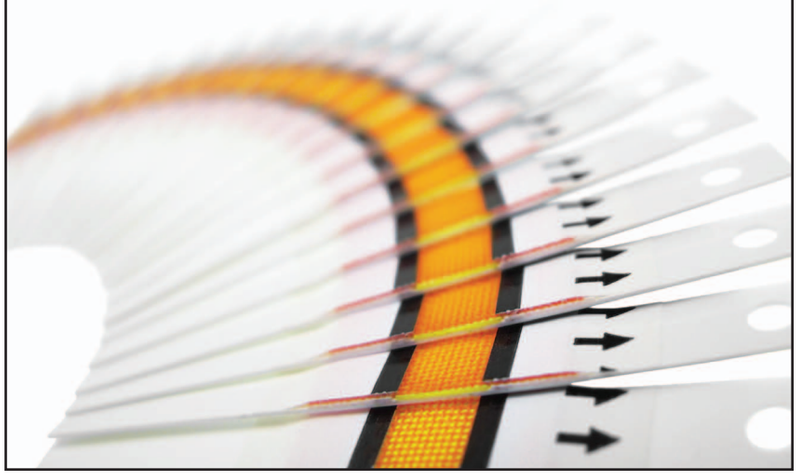

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torch to another couple who will no doubt keep the nationally renowned shop's doors open to debut Minnesota authors as well as New York Times best-seller titles. One week after the sale, Schulze died of leukemia. Used, but very much loved, Once Upon a Crime is an Uptown story that has many more chapters to go before it sleeps.

Readers' Choice: Half Price Books

BEST ART SUPPLIES

ArtScraps

1459 ST. CLAIR AVE.
ST. PAUL
651-698-2787

www.artstart.org/artscraps-reuse-store

You're a creative person, and you have a great idea that you're ready to make reality. You're on a very tight budget, however. So where do you go? ArtScraps in the Mac-Groveland area is worth a stop. The inventory at this unusual art-supply store is unpredictable (and potentially awesome), as it's composed of discontinued, overstocked, and factory-rejected items, plus scraps and other odds and ends that might have otherwise been tossed in a landfill. Never-before-used markers, colorful cardstock, neon sticky paper, and glitter of every shape, size, and sparkle can be found here. Purchases are made by the bag, supplies are displayed just like at any other craft and art supply store, and the prices are far cheaper than what you would find at a chain. You may even find yourself coming up with new inspirations while strolling through the aisles.

Readers' Choice: Dick Blick Art Materials

BEST CLOTHING STORE (CHILDREN)

Teeny Bee Boutique

1560 SELBY AVE.
ST. PAUL
612-644-2540

www.teenybeeboutique.com

While there is no shortage of places to purchase onesies, pajamas, and tiny little shoes, there's a place in St. Paul that thinks beyond just fashion and sells things that make moms and dads say, "Where has this been all my life?" Owner Kristie Case, a mother of two, opened the doors to Teeny Bee Boutique just over two years ago, providing a place for parents to buy the most fashion-forward clothes for their zero- to four-year-olds, as well as a haven for moms and dads to entertain those little ones. With weekly events like play dates and music classes, there's no shortage of fun things to keep kids busy (the store even has a playroom with

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trampolines, slides, and other toys), which is especially clutch in the winter months. As for the clothing selection, there's a huge variety of flashy footies, colorful training pants, trendy puffer vests, and a whole lot more. Best of all, the shop sells cool stuff that makes parents' lives easier, from teething rings that don't need a freezer to Sock-Ons, which actually keep those adorable socks from sliding off.

BEST TOY STORE

Mischief Toy

818 GRAND AVE.
ST. PAUL
651-493-3307

www.mischieftoy.com

While most toy stores are designed to meet the needs of the young, not all of them necessarily cater to the young at heart. Mischief Toy Store calls itself "a toy store for all ages, encouraging kids and grownups to unplug and make a little mischief." With a massive selection of games, collectibles, books, art, and friendly mayhem, the spot is a one-stop shop for kiddos who want books and puzzles, older kids looking for Magic cards, and even pop-culture collectibles and anime gifts for moms and dads. On top of being a great place to buy toys, Mischief allows guests to stay and play, hosting weekly gaming tournaments on-site, and teaching those who may not understand the game so that everyone feels like they belong. Whether you're looking for a coloring book, a Japanese candy kit, or the latest Funko Pop! figurines, you'll find just the right kind of mischief to get into at this St. Paul toy store.

BEST LOCAL APP

MplsParking App

612-343-7275

www.mplsparking.com

Whoever came up with this app, which lets you feed your meter remotely instead of at the pay station, is some kind of mad genius. You mean we don't have to freeze our fingers off in the middle of January pushing buttons? Or worse, wait behind someone else in line in the bitter cold? Sign us up! Even better, the ability to add to your time remotely means fewer tickets and less hassle. Minneapolis' parking app launched in August in the North Loop, then expanded last fall to the entire city. Sure, it's a little more expensive, with a $.25 fee per transaction for non-members (or $.15 fee for members who pay $1 a month), but the peace of mind, and the convenience, is completely worth it. St. Paul launched its own parking app program for downtown in January, and we couldn't be more pleased.

BEST HOTEL

The Westin Minneapolis

88 S. SIXTH ST.
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612-333-4006

www.starwoodhotels.com

For a luxury staycation in the heart of downtown, you can do no better than the Westin Minneapolis. This elegant inn was originally the Farmers and Mechanics Bank. It was built in the early 1900s, then rehabbed to maintain the swank and class of yesteryear. The rooms are as spacious and as nice as anything you'll find in Minneapolis. There's a fitness center complete with whirlpool and hot tub, plus an indoor pool. But the retro glamour is at its finest in the B.A.N.K. restaurant and bar, which serves modern American food, craft cocktails, and delicious shots of Jameson. Because you always need delicious shots of Jameson. That's just accepted science. Alas, the Westin is not for the weak of pocketbook. Room prices start at $180 a night and quickly soar. But when you want a romantic weekend where your customary economy is being temporarily stifled, this is the place for you.

Readers' Choice: W Minneapolis — The Foshay

BEST WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER

Gene Pease of Geneoh Photography

1330 QUINCY ST. NE #406
MINNEAPOLIS
763-639-3522

www.geneoh.com

There are a lot of things that can — and will — go wrong on your wedding day, but the photography shouldn't be one of them. With your pictures in the trusted hands of Gene Pease of Geneoh Photography, you can rest assured the treasured moments of your special day will be impeccably captured. A former graphic designer, Pease uses film and digital to nab candid, evocative images that couples will cherish forever. Specializing in fine art and documentary photography, Pease manages to make every photoshoot as unique as the bride and groom themselves. Though he lives in Minneapolis, this husband/father/dog lover travels worldwide for work. His photography, which is particularly striking in outdoor settings, has been featured on Green Wedding Shoes, Once Wed, and Ruffled Blog, just to name a few.

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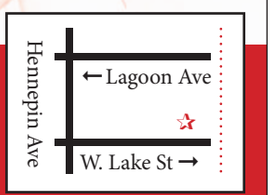

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BEST SPORTS TEAM

Minnesota Lynx

www.lynx.wnba.com

Among Minnesota's great lake of athletic disappointments, the Lynx are the only major team that hasn't colossally let us down in the past five years. Rather, the WNBA juggernaut is in full-on dynasty mode, winning three championships since 2011 — when clutch forward Maya Moore came into the league — and missing the finals only once in that time. The sweet-stroking, basket-attacking star in her prime plus longtime leader Seimone Augustus and hometown girl Lindsay Whalen equals the most rootable Big Three in Minnesota sports. Even if the Timberwolves' bright young stars fulfill their promise, they still might be the second most exciting basketball squad in the state.

Readers' Choice: Minnesota Lynx

BEST COACH

Mike Zimmer

www.vikings.com

The Lynx and the Gophers women's hockey team are Minnesota's most triumphant sporting ventures. The Wild are the closest to our native cultural hearts. But when it comes to pure rooting interests, no one comes close to the Vikings, one of the NFL's more stable and successful franchises since arriving in the Glorious Northland in 1961. But the Period of Unspeakable Darkness — also known as the Christian Ponder Era — left fans crying for a savior to lift us from the roaring sadness of overthrown four-yard curl patterns. Enter Coach Mike Zimmer. He's slowly recreating the Vikes into an old-school team heavy on defense and centered on the run, a relatively starless squad meant to endure. The Purple are rising through the draft and forsaking spendy free agents. It may not be a glamourous path to resurrection, but it's a solid one. Captaining this ship is Zimmer, who quickly earned the respect of players and fans alike. Though it's far too early to tell, initial signs suggest he may be the best coach to prowl the sidelines since Bud Grant.

Readers' Choice: Flip Saunders

BEST TWINS PLAYER

Miguel Sano

www.minnesota.twins.mlb.com

Since the days of Babe Ruth, the big, brawny, larger-than-life slugger has been the most mystical figure in sport. Alas, the Twins haven't had one for 40 years, since loveable hero Harmon Killebrew checked out of Met Stadium. But last year, Miguel Sano showed up at Target Field. And with him came the shimmering hope that, finally, the Twins had a singular player worth the price of admission. Yes, he appeared in only 80 games. And, yes, he jacked only 18 homers. But he showed the potential to become one of the American League's next great long-ball threats. On a team with a popgun offense, Sano presents the thrill of something big, something special, every time he steps to the plate.

Readers' Choice: Joe Mauer

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BEST LYNX PLAYER

Maya Moore

www.lynx.wnba.com

If the greatness of an athlete is best measured by her accumulation of titles, Maya Moore is hands-down the most transcendent player in Minnesota history. In just five seasons with the Lynx, she's won three WNBA titles. This comes on top of her days at Connecticut, when the Huskies went an astounding 150-4 and won two NCAA titles. She also twice won the Naismith Award as the nation's best female high school player. Moore's been named the WNBA's Rookie of the Year, as well as its MVP. And she's won three gold medals for the U.S. women's team in both the Olympics and the FIBA world championships. Though she may not receive the attention her male counterparts get, the sheer volume of her accomplishments dwarfs those of any other basketball player in Minnesota.

Readers' Choice: Maya Moore

BEST WILD PLAYER

Charlie Coyle

www.wild.nhl.com

With an aging cast of veterans signed to bloated contracts, it's only a matter of time before the Wild are pummeled to mediocrity by the salary cap. Yet there is one emerging star capable of leading us from this impending purgatory: Charlie Coyle. The 25-year-old center-winger is the complete package. At 6-foot-3 and 220 pounds, he nonetheless possesses the skill, stickhandling, and moves of a jitterbug. On a team generally starved for scoring and short on great prospects in the minors, he's the lone light among the Wild's younger crop suited to becoming a big-time NHL scorer. Coyle may not hit enough for his size — with the Wild, the lines for the men's room are more physical than the action on the ice. But if he learns to start laying the thunder, Coyle has the potential to become one of the best power forwards in the league.

Readers' Choice: Zach Parise

BEST VIKINGS PLAYER

Harrison Smith

www.vikings.com

Save for running back Adrian Peterson, the Vikings aren't known for celebrity. Their return from the dead has been built on rookie linebackers, heavy rotations on the defensive line, and a collection of no-names playing together to create a sum greater than its parts. Safety Harrison Smith is a pillar of this philosophy. He can play the pass, yet still tackle with the best of defensive backs. He's smart and reads offenses well. In other words, he's a consummate pro. Though he has but one Pro Bowl to his name, he's an exquisite piece for building a defense-first team that's short on glamour and self-promotion, but long on constructing the kind of do-your-job cohesiveness that makes for winning football in the NFL.

Readers' Choice: Teddy Bridgewater

BEST TIMBERWOLVES PLAYER

Karl-Anthony Towns

www.nba.com/timberwolves

The Timberwolves haven't offered much to cheer about since the Kevin Garnett Era, Part I. This is a team that hasn't tasted the playoffs in 12 years. But there is reason for hope. It goes by the name of Karl-Anthony Towns. The 20-year-old center is that most rare of breed, the big man capable of scoring inside or out, rebounding, passing, blocking shots, and even handling the ball on the fast break. Though the center position has declined in import — largely due to the lack of qualified applicants — Towns has the potential to revolutionize the post, melding the outside gunning of the modern age with the inside jousting of yesteryear. Yes, it's always unwise to view the Timberwolves in any shade of optimism. They're still among the worst teams in the NBA. But along with budding youngsters Andrew Wiggins and Zach LaVine, Towns may herald a day when you're no longer embarrassed to speak this optimism aloud. And it may come sooner than you think.

Readers' Choice: Karl-Anthony Towns

BEST COLLEGE ATHLETE

Rachel Banham

www.gophersports.com/sports/w-baskbl/minn-w-baskbl-body.html

She's the leading scorer in Big 10 women's basketball history. Her 60 points against Northwestern in February tied her for the highest-scoring game in NCAA history. She holds nine Gopher records for everything from three-point shooting to free throws to field goals. And she's been nominated for virtually every national award in the country, including being named a first-team All-American this season. She is Rachel Banham, the 5-foot-9 scoring machine who's surely one of the greatest athletes in University of Minnesota history. This

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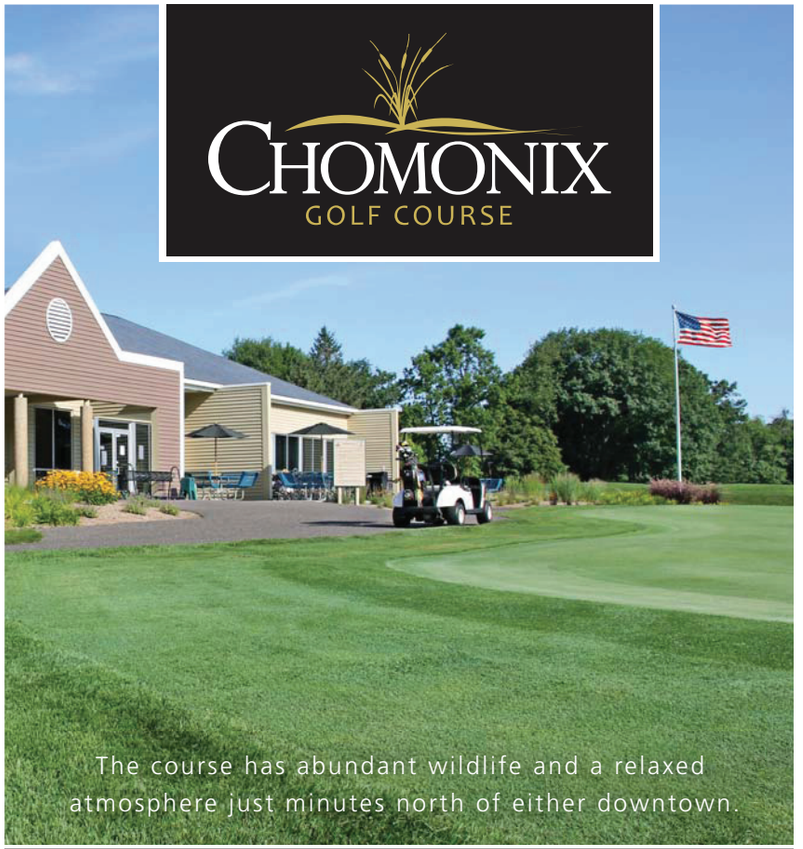

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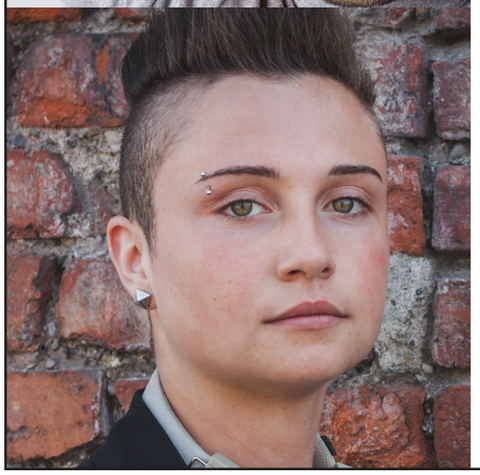

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year, her senior season, Banham averaged 28.6 points a game, placing her in the Steph Curry/Kevin Durant stratosphere of dangerous threats. Though her time at the U has come to an end, here's hoping the Lakeville North grad can stay in Minnesota and keep her guns loaded for the Lynx.

BEST COLLEGE RECRUIT

Amir Coffey, University of Minnesota basketball

Hopkins High stud Amir Coffey is just what Gopher basketball needs. A lean 6-foot-7 guard, with long, long arms and a kangaroo-quick leap, he has a clockwork jumpshot that swirls gracefully through the basket. This year, he added a state championship and a Mr. Basketball title to his name, averaging 20 points a game. Big-time schools like Arizona, Michigan State, and Wisconsin bid for his services. Coffey decided to stay in the Twin Cities. Soon after, the Gophers, who were already playing terribly, suspended three of their best players for their role in a sex-tape scandal. Coffey looks like a fresh start. Maybe what the Gophers needed all along was growing up right under their noses.

BEST TV SPORTS ANCHOR

Mark Rosen

www.minnesota.cbslocal.com/personality/mark-rosen/

Local sportscasting isn't what it used to be. The rise of the 24-hour networks, nonstop radio shows, and geyser of websites have left the nightly news something of an afterthought. But there remains one king of the Twin Cities. He is Mark Rosen. He began his career at WCCO when he was still a junior high school student in St. Louis Park. Over the years, Rosey became an institution through his empathy, his humility, and his downhome manner that's always been short on histrionics. Decades later, he's still a breath of fresh air within the sporting commentariat, an antidote to the screeching blather that's overrun the field, where so many think they're suited to becoming a Vikings coordinator just because they play a lot of Madden. With Mark Rosen, you don't have to turn off the sound. Or worry about suffering damage to your IQ.

Readers' Choice: Mark Rosen

BEST SPORTS RADIO PERSONALITY

Paul Allen

www.kfan.com

When the Vikings lose, Paul Allen sounds near-suicidal. When they win? It's as though he's mainlining purple dopamine laced with uppers. KFAN's longtime 9-to-noon radio ace is the verbose avatar for the collective heart of Minnesota sports fans. Allen, an unabashed Vikes booster, invites listeners onto his "Therapeutic Davenport of Love" to wallow or rejoice, the results of which feel more like X's & O's-infused therapy sessions than talk radio. The game-day voice of the Vikes has surplus swagger, orchestrating his "Love Covenant" like a blue-eyed soul preacher with a deathly aversion to ending sentences with prepositions. When the geyser of true believer emotion runs out of joy and/or despair, Allen's program dovetails beautifully into the benign indifference of talker Dan "Common Man" Cole's idiosyncratic pro-grum. It's the best one-two combo since Carter and Moss.

BEST SPORTS WRITER

Aaron Gleeman

www.aarongleeman.com

Twins fans have no greater resource than Aaron Gleeman. The prolific baseball blogger, who recently wrapped up more than 10 years with NBC Sports, is a deep reservoir of knowledge, one you can tap into via his personal Twins blog at aarongleeman.com. Gleeman's a sabermetrics wonk, even having coined a namesake stat: the Gross Production Average. But his insights are easily digestible for the common fan, and his laser-sharp analysis puts Twins Cities beat writers to shame. The U of M dropout was never hired by campus newspaper the Minnesota Daily,

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despite nine applications. No matter, as he was busy cranking out entries on his blog, which has attracted more than 12 million visitors since 2002. These days, you can find Gleeman dropping stats, facts, and takes on KFAN, his own Gleeman and the Geek podcast, and to his 25,000 loyal Twitter followers, many of whom also value his keen brunch-scouting abilities.

BEST SPORTS HIGHLIGHT

The All-Hockey Hair Team

Hockey is Minnesota's state sport, hands down. Our second favorite pastime is obsessing about all the cultural quirks that make us Minnesota. That's why for many, the real show at the state high school tournament comes before the puck even drops. Since 2011, the amateur videos recognizing the All Hockey Hair Team have captivated millions of followers, introducing viewers to high schoolers whose hair-growing talents equal their hockey skills. The 2016 version was headed toward two million views within its first month on Youtube. The best part is the kids seem to be in on the joke: They skate right up to the camera for their introduction with big smiles, luxuriating in the close-up time they and their fabulous hair get on camera.

BEST PUBLIC PARK

South Valley Park

2810 70TH ST. E.
INVER GROVE HEIGHTS
651-226-5512

www.ci.inver-grove-heights.mn.us

Pull into South Valley Park, and it will seem like any other. There's a playground, a baseball field, a sledding hill, and a picnic area, usually occupied by extended families celebrating a child's birthday. But walk south for just a few minutes, and you'll suddenly be completely alone, surrounded by forest in the Twin Cities' best-kept secret. There's a paved path running through the center for bikers and the less hearty. Jump on any of the myriad dirt trails, and you'll feel as if you've been transported into the North Woods. The hiking is moderately difficult, with steep ravines and swamps. Yet the maze of trails seems to run forever, the dense forest allowing you to forget that you're surrounded by subdivisions on the hills above. The best part: South Valley is curiously under-used, despite being just 10 minutes south of downtown St. Paul. Stick to the unpaved paths, and it's rare that you'll encounter another human being.

Readers' Choice: Minnehaha Park and Falls

BEST DOG PARK

Battle Creek Dog Park

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www.battlecreekdogpark.org

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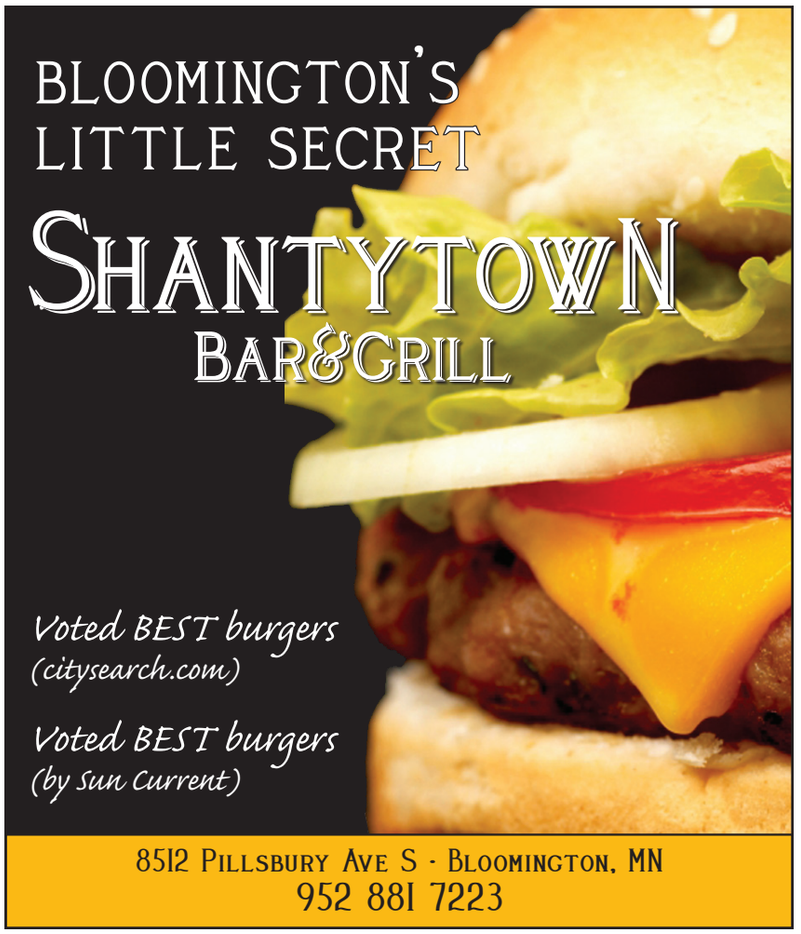

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651-778-0413

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Poseurs flock to that other city's chain of lakes. But the people's waters, where the walleye are prettier and the swimming youngsters are happier, is Lake Phalen. It's so magnificent it requires two cities, St. Paul and Maplewood, to contain it, with nearly 500 verdant acres and miles of pedestrian and bike paths. The park features an 18-hole golf course and a swimming beach with kid-friendly perks like soft sand, shallow depths, and weeds nowhere within a dozen strokes of a little one learning the crawl. About 6,300 steps gets you around Lake Phalen's 3.1-mile walking path. But the nearly three miles of fishable shoreline won't stop teasing until you give in and make that first cast. Diverse crowds of super chill folks make the lake an even better experience. But finding the honey hole where that pig of a walleye, tiger muskie, or bass lurks is all on you.

Readers' Choice: Lake Calhoun

BEST BIKE TRAIL

Cedar Lake

MINNEAPOLIS

www.threeriversparks.org

On early summer mornings when Cedar Lake looks like a sheet of glass, bicyclists and skaters dominate the 4.3-mile trail that follows the old Burlington Northern train tracks from underneath Target Field to Highway 100 in St. Louis Park. There, it connects to the Southwest LRT Trail. To the north, the work yards and restaurants of downtown Minneapolis connect to West River Parkway, which opens to a path alongside the Mississippi River. Cedar Lake Trail is America's first bicycle freeway, with two lanes of paved one-way routes for bikers and another for pedestrians.

BEST PLACE TO JOG

Hidden Falls Park

1415 MISSISSIPPI
RIVER BLVD. S.
ST. PAUL

www.stpaul.gov

There's no shortage of scenery in the Twin Cities, but the best parks are often the busiest. A good run requires a lot of things: varied terrain, a cool breeze, a motivational view, and — most important — space to get around the strollers and leashes to wear off those winter pounds. Hidden Falls Park is the gem of Mississippi River Boulevard South, a quiet sibling to Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis. The trails are tranquil and calm — separated for speedy bikes and at-your-own-pace joggers — with waterfalls, the Mighty Mississippi, and ample shade to give variety, solitude, and serenity to the daily run.

BEST HIKE

Wild River State Park

39797 PARK TRAIL
CENTER CITY
651-583-2125

www.dnr.state.mn.us

This is a commute you'll want to make a ritual. Fifty-five miles northwest of the cities, Wild River State Park gives visitors the feeling that civilization doesn't exist. More than 30 miles of trail snake throughout the park that hugs the St. Croix River. What makes Wild River a treasure is its utility. Seven easy hiking trails such as the wildflowers-laden River Terrace Loop, which crests on the north end by climbing 164 winding steps, are complemented by four slightly more challenging options. For hikers wanting to feel the burn, the Aspen Knob Loop's steep hills and Grizzly Adams terrain calls out. It's one of the park's two most challenging trails, with scattered pines decorating the way. One cautionary word: Mosquitoes love Wild River State Park too. But they're easily outsmarted by visiting the park in early spring and late fall.

BEST PLACE TO PLAY BOOT HOCKEY

Pearl Park

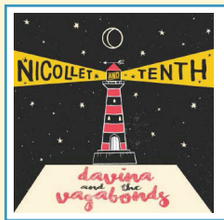
414 E. DIAMOND LAKE RD.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-370-4906

www.minneapolisparks.org

Since 1929, there's been a skating rink at Pearl Park, located just north of Diamond Lake in Minneapolis' Page neighborhood. On any given winter day, even when the windchill burns exposed flesh, the hockey rink and adjacent ice sheet welcome all. No skates? No problem. Pearl beckons youngsters, former high school puck heroes, and parents alike. If you time it right — say, lunchtime on a day when school is out — you'll get in on a friendly battle when sticks are plucked from the pile

dakota

www.dakotacooks.com
Tickets: 612.332.5299 // Reservations: 612.332.1010
1010 Nicollet Mall, Downtown Minneapolis



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5/5	Paul Thorn Southern Gothic Troubadour
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BEST PLACE TO ICE SKATE

Guidant John Rose Minnesota Oval

2661 CIVIC CENTER DR.
ROSEVILLE
651-792-7007

www.skatetheoval.com

The International Olympic Committee's loss is a huge win for the Great North's skaters. In 1983, Gov. Rudy Perpich convinced lawmakers to award state bonding money to build a multi-purpose outdoor skating facility that the IOC couldn't say no to. They did. A 400-meter loop surrounds an infield ice arena that's hosted World Bandy Championships and various international and national skating tournaments. But the Oval and its inner playground are always at their best for the locals. The infield can be divvied up into four hockey rinks, ensuring that hardcore speed skaters in training and novices just learning never suffer an interrupted stride. Options to get out on the ice range from bandy programs to public skating and open hockey, to speed skating clubs and figure skating lessons. It's a world-class facility right off Highway 36 that's family-affordable. Public skating and open hockey costs $5.50 per person and $4 for skate rentals.

Readers' Choice: The Depot

BEST PLACE TO SLED

Columbia Golf Course

3300 CENTRAL AVE. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-230-6520

www.minneapolisparks.org

As long as there's snow, Columbia Golf Course has tubes, sleds, cross country skis, and snowshoes for rent. Not for the faint of heart, Columbia boasts the steepest hill for miles around. Admission is free. But you've gotta sweat for the privilege of flying down this hill as many times as your heart desires. There's no tow line to haul you back up, so you have to make the industrious trek on your own the way your grandparents did it. The nearby Columbia Manor clubhouse is a warm place to thaw out, and serves cocoa on weekends.

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BEST PLACE TO WARM UP WHEN IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

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BLOOMINGTON
952-883-0202

www.visitsealife.com/minnesota

Want to feel like you're on a tropical vacation in the dead of winter? Sea Life Aquarium Minnesota can be your staycation for less than $20. Located in the Mall of America, this underwater zoo keeps things toasty year-round so its water creatures and human guests stay warm. Those who enter will make their way along a 300-foot underwater tube as thousands of fish swim by. There are many giant tanks to check out as well, and stingrays and other beasties come out at certain times of the day to be pet and fed. While this is a great snow-day time killer when you have kids, Sea Life is also teen- and grownup-friendly, as the aquarium becomes 16-and-up after 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Special date-night events often pop up on the calendar as well, and if you find love, Sea Life offers underwater wedding packages (honeymoon at the nearby waterpark?).

BEST SIGN OF SPRING

Sven Sundgaard's deltoids

www.twitter.com/svensundgaard

KARE 11 Sunrise meteorologist Sven Sundgaard is way more than the dreamy weatherman we depend on to tell us what's to come from the skies above. We also lean on him to be a harbinger of Mother Nature's changing seasons. Sundgaard is so fit he makes Michael Phelps look like he let himself go. Maintaining that low body fat percentage demands consistent cardio. Minneapolitans who frequent the chain of lakes know Sundgaard jogs in the area with regularity and for months he's forced to cover up that ripped physique to fend off frostbite. Spring means the long sleeves are coming off and Sundgaard again will be getting his heart rate up on the paths in some kind of less-is-more wear that not only demands that we pay attention, but tells us all is right in the world and the season of budding flowers and fuzzy ducklings is upon us.

BEST PLACE TO DO SOMETHING FOR FREE

Films at the Fitz

FITZGERALD THEATER,
10 EXCHANGE ST. E.
ST. PAUL
651-290-1200

fitzgeraldtheater.publicradio.org/events

With its dramatic ceiling, posh velvet seats, and cool balcony views, the Fitzgerald Theater just feels special. Taking in a movie through Films at the Fitz allows cinema-lovers to experience the venue for free. The series takes a bit of inspiration from *Rocky Horror*, inviting audiences to dress in character, sing along to musical numbers, applaud during the best lines, and interact with the evening's selection in other playful ways. The lineup has included cult classics like *The Big Lebowski*, *Labyrinth*, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Drinks from the bar add to the festive atmosphere, and there's often live music to kick off the fun. Tickets are free, but you must RSVP online beforehand, and screenings frequently sell out.

BEST GYM

The Aviary

201 SIXTH ST. SE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-405-0092

www.theaviarympls.com

There's cardio and strength-training and yoga, and then there's flipping through the air in a hammock, crunching and stretching your core like a brawny bird. The Aviary is a new boutique workout studio that opened in the sleek lower level of the historic Telephone Building. The owner specializes in trapeze arts, silks, and lyra hoops. Hammocks hang above the ground, and trainers incorporate Pilates moves into easy choreography that uses gravity and your own body as counter weight. The Aviary is an elegant and addictive alternative to grimacing in the mirror while lifting weights over and over.

Readers' Choice: Lifetime Fitness

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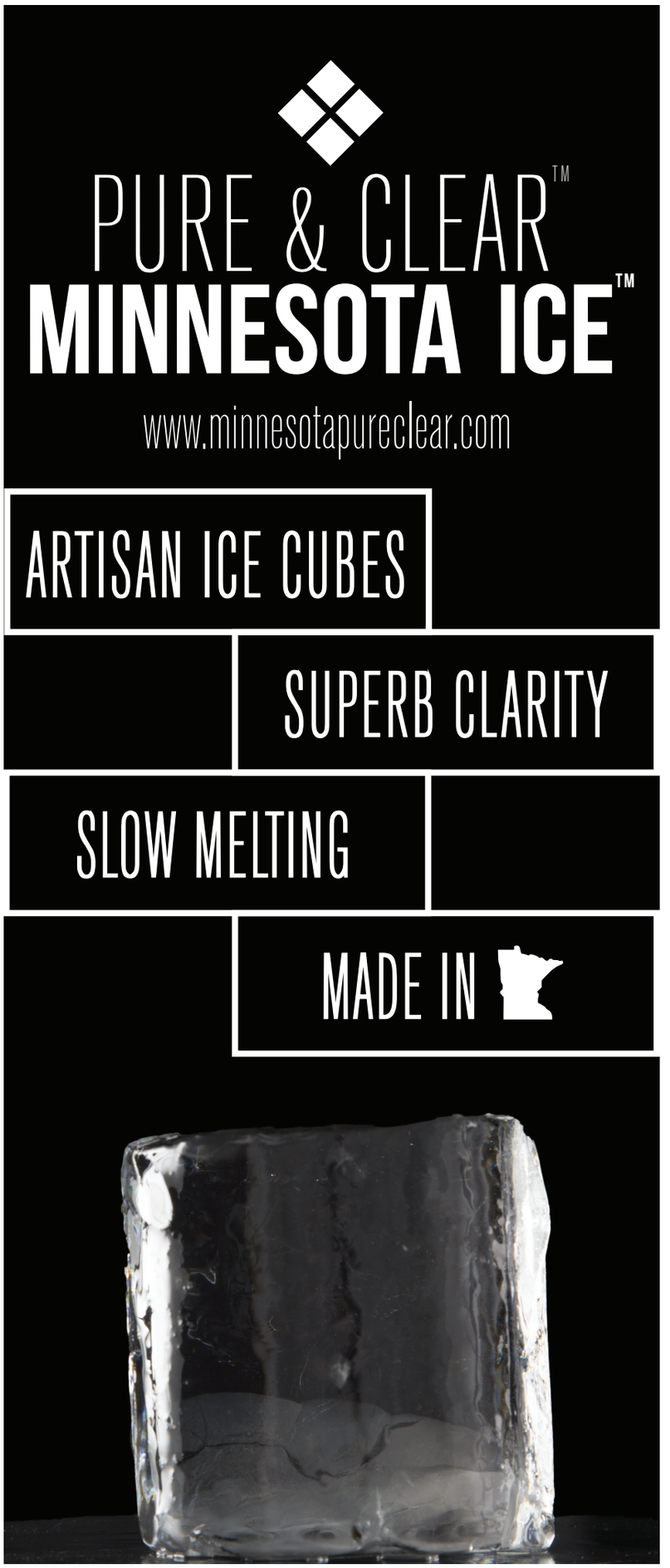

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customers paying for the opportunity to sweat and breathe before getting on their mats for rounds of cat and cow. No matter the location, whomever the instructor, CorePower delivers challenging yet ever-evolving sequences that prove they've somehow figured out how to multiply locations without sacrificing quality. Sixty-minute sessions are the norm, with some long ones sprinkled in for variety. Those new to the mat as well as practitioners who can hold flying crow with a smile are guaranteed to find a class to their liking. The $139 Black Tag Membership brings the cost of practice down with each visit. When you've taken the final bow, CorePower's slick and always sparkling locker rooms offer free mouthwash and body lotion, because you just did something really good for you.

Readers' Choice: CorePower Yoga

BEST PLACE TO SHOOT POOL

Jimmy's Pro Billiards

4040 CENTRAL AVE. NE
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
763-706-1904

www.jimmys-pro-billiards.com

Run by local legend Jimmy Wetch, once the fifth greatest billiards player in the world, this place retains a vibe reminiscent of the great pool halls of the golden 1980s. Jimmy's Pro Billiards is one of the few places left that still carries dozens of immaculate, premier tables, including 9-foot Diamond tables and a 12-foot snooker table. A bunch of seasoned semi-pros hang out here, but casual amateurs are more than welcome too — just as long as they don't commit the ultimate sin of trying to balance a beer on the rail. Come around enough and you might pick up some insider tricks. Jimmy vacuums his equipment like a madman. The tiny kitchen in the back churns out colossal burgers. The whole area is home to a stand of equally serious pool halls. If you think you're good at pool, you could go to CC Club and try to hustle the drunk kids, but go to Jimmy's for quality competition.

Readers' Choice: Grumpy's

BEST BOWLING ALLEY

Town Hall Lanes

5019 34TH AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-767-3354

www.thlanes.com

Be honest. If your score is lower than your weight, the bowling part of most bowling alleys is pretty much the same: You get a ball, size up 10 pins, and try not to embarrass yourself. What sets Town Hall Lanes apart is what you can get into before, after, or in between frames. Namely, chowing down on some legit bar food — from cheese-stuffed pretzels to thick, well-topped burgers — and gulping some outstanding in-house beers. Just because you've got an itch to roll doesn't mean you have to peck at freezer fries. Try eating a big, real brunch, biscuits and gravy, or a breakfast burrito, and washing it all down with a few Masala Mamas and some lazily rolled frames in a family-friendly setting. If there's a better way to waste the hours on an obligation-free Sunday, we can't think of it.

Readers' Choice: Bryant-Lake Bowl

BEST DISC GOLF COURSE

Valley Disc Golf Course

2800 70TH ST. E.
INVER GROVE HEIGHTS
651-226-5512

www.ci.inver-grove-heights.mn.us

Rated championship-level by the Professional Disc Golf Association, this beautiful course sits just south of St. Paul, where the suburbs begin to meet the country. Valley is an exquisite place, centered by open parkland. Most of its 18 holes make their way through the woods of the surrounding hillsides. It's not a course for the weak of arm. One wicked hilltop tee requires players to overshoot a pond — and a thick stand of trees beyond. Though Valley gets fair traffic, it's not especially crowded, even on the nicest summer days. The price per round is officially $5, but the self-pay portal is often vandalized.

BEST PICNIC SPOT

Como Park

1225 ESTABROOK DR.
ST. PAUL
651-487-8201

www.comozooconservatory.org

Since its opening in 1897, Como Park has been an oasis of green within the Capital City, 384 acres of tree-canopied majesty. It's the best place in the cities to pitch a blanket, pull out a cooler, and spend the day with the family. When it comes to amenities, nothing touches Como. It's equipped with a lake, a golf course, a pool, a conservatory with flowers and plants galore, plus baseball and soccer fields. And did we mention the zoo? Oh, yes, there's a zoo. And it's free, with everything from polar bears to wolves to Comotown, an amusement park for the

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BEST WEEKEND GETAWAY

Duluth

800-438-5884

www.visitduluth.com/

Minneapolitans tend to think they live in the greatest city in the Midwest, if not the country. But truth be told, we don't even live in the coolest city in Minnesota. That designation belongs to — *cue the trumpets!* — the Mighty City of Duluth. From rocky cliffs to beaches, from soaring hills to Lake Superior, this is easily the most gorgeous town on the northern prairie. And its entertainment options are endless. Every outdoor sport you can imagine is just minutes away, from cross-country skiing to fishing. There's shopping, restaurants, bars, breweries, all with breathtaking views of the harbor. Though Duluth's popularity is beginning to make it feel a bit overrun, a quick jaunt up the North Shore will soon have you immersed in some of the most beautiful wilderness this country has to offer. And there will be smoked fish stands. Because wilderness is always way more beautiful when it comes with smoked fish stands.

BEST DAY TRIP

Spicer

www.spicermn.com

It's time we stopped sleeping on Spicer, a hiccup of a drive northwest of the Twin Cities. The Kandiyohi County hamlet is home to perhaps the cleanest, clearest waters in the state. It's also where all the panfish are slightly above average. A morning start ensures that you'll arrive on the banks of Green Lake before the sunshine has evaporated the dew from the chokecherries. A 12-mile bike trail encircles Green Lake. At Saulsbury Beach, the hours zoom by building sandcastles, catching rays, and turning summer days into lifelong memories. Nearby Little Crow Country Club's inviting greens beckon with rounds priced under $30. Glacial Ridge Winery offers classes on grape-related topics, including suppertime wine pairing. Before heading home, make a quick stop at one of the many roadside farmers' stands peddling the earth's tastiest vittles.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE OUT-OF-TOWN GUESTS

Stillwater

651.351.1717

www.discoverstillwater.com

When your sister and her family fly in from Cleveland, it's not an easy call. You need a one-stop destination that spans all ages and interests. You need a place that speaks to both active and sedentary. What you need is Stillwater. Minnesota's oldest city has been named one of the 10 Prettiest Towns in America by Forbes. Along the pristine St. Croix River, the energetic can canoe, kayak, bike, or hike. For the more leisurely, there are wineries and breweries, boutiques and antiques, plus bars and restaurants galore. For the more intellectually inclined, there's some of the finest old architecture Minnesota has to offer, plus historical trolley tours that take you back to the state's days on the frontier. And for the little ones, there's even Teddy Bear Park, featuring a tree house, slides, magicians, and, yes, giant teddy bears.

BEST VIEW

Pioneer Park

515 N. SECOND ST.
STILLWATER
651-430-8800

www.ci.stillwater.mn.us

As far as parks go, Pioneer isn't much to brag about. This small patch of land nestled in a residential neighborhood offers picnic shelters, a playground, an old-time band shell, and a few grills. But its true value is its perch on the bluffs overlooking downtown Stillwater and the majestic St. Croix River beyond. This is one of the country's most protected waterways, its banks north of town unspoiled by billboards, Holiday Inns, and lighted beacons for Home Depot. In a metro area that tends to be a tad short of scenic topography, Pioneer's view of Stillwater's historic center, the shimmering river, and the wooded hills of western Wisconsin will keep you serene and captivated.

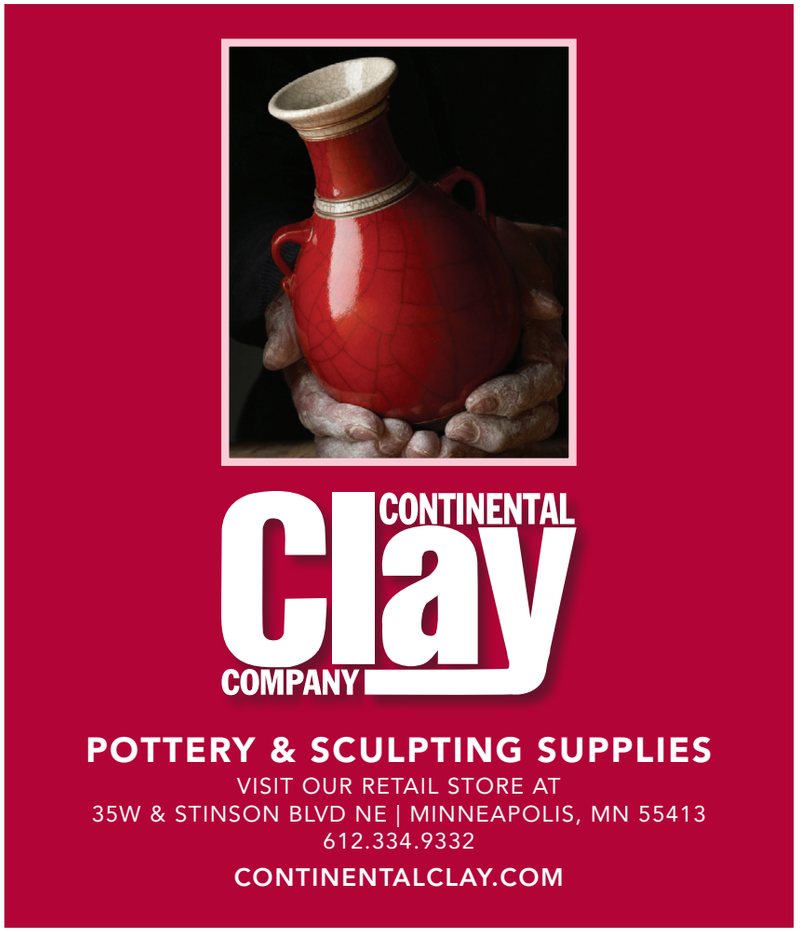
BEST LOCAL LANDMARK

Kenwood Water Tower

1724 KENWOOD PKWY.
MINNEAPOLIS

www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/hpc/landmarks/

The medieval tower just south of I-394 looks like it belongs on the set of *Monty*



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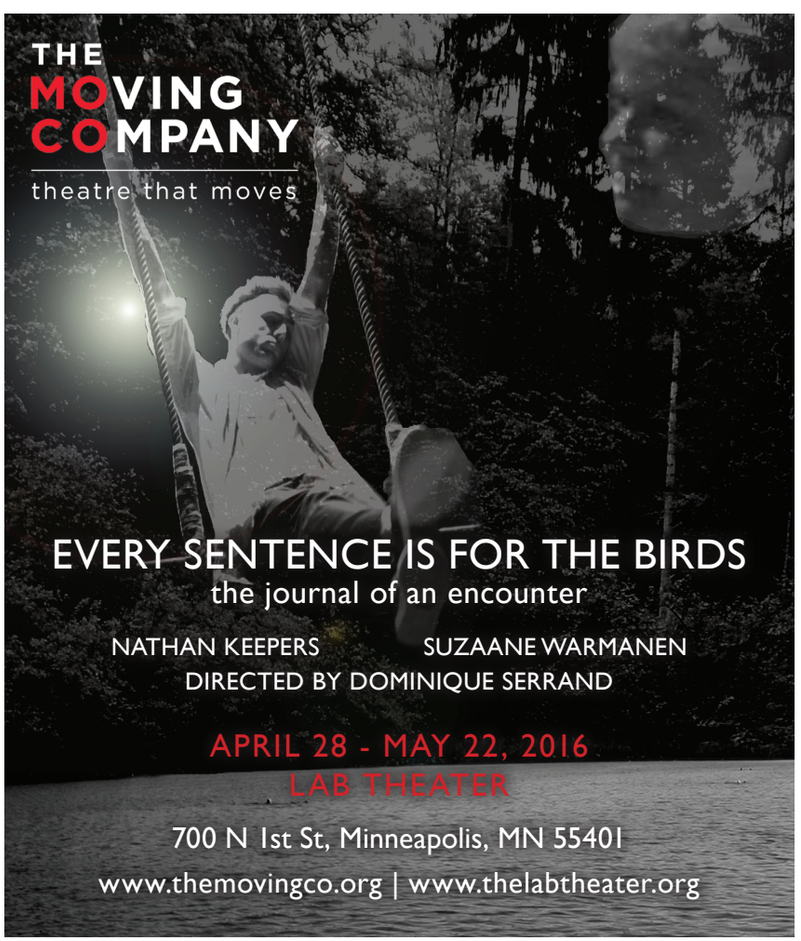

Python and the Holy Grail, not perched alone in one of the City of Lakes' poshest neighborhoods. One hundred and six years young, the octagonal brick and stone Kenwood Water Tower rises 110 feet. The fortress, which originally was constructed to alleviate water pressure and storage problems for nearby Lowry Hill residents, hasn't been tasked with actual work as a holding tank since 1954. Yet what it lacks in utility, the tower makes up for in handsomeness. It's kind of eerie, kind of bad ass, and sort of romantic too. It's an architectural curiosity that's totally out of place, yet exactly where it was always meant to be as a reminder to us all that this is home.

BEST PLACE TO MEET SINGLE MEN (GAY)

19 Bar

19 W. 15TH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-5553

The 19 Bar, established in 1952, is a Loring Park dive with a humble, blink-and-you-miss-it exterior that leads into spacious seating, a game room replete with lovingly kept pool tables under stained-glass lamps, and a massive deck out back. A favorite landing spot for Pride Fest goers, it's haunted daily by salt-of-the-earth neighborhood guys. You never have to fight with the 1990s soundtrack for a good conversation. The crowd leans on the chill, mature side. The bar is cash only. Generous pitchers of beer are cheap and the pizza is cheesy. For a bunker atmosphere any time of the day or night, the eternal twilight of the 19 Bar is an oasis away from the constant noise of Nicollet.

BEST PLACE TO MEET SINGLE MEN (STRAIGHT)

Community Keg House

34 13TH AVE. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
651-964-5454

www.communitykeghouse.com

Nowadays, the measure of a man is his expertise in the pouring of a beer with just the right amount of head, the perfect sculpting of considerable facial hair, and conversational wit shared over a deep array of taps showcasing 100 percent locally brewed beers and ciders. At Community Keg House, beers, beards, and boys crowd long wooden tables like modern-day Vikings with a taste for healthy small plates and an appreciation for gallery art. This recently founded 4,000-square-foot temple of beer is located in the old Grain Belt plant in Northeast. Folks pay by the empty glass and pour for themselves, which makes it a great Tinder watering hole. Kindly staffers are on hand to provide sample cups and help train your tap-cranking wrist technique.

BEST PLACE TO MEET SINGLE WOMEN (LESBIAN)

The Town House

1415 UNIVERSITY AVE. W.
ST. PAUL
651-646-7087

www.townhousebar.com

In a world where gay bars are legion but gay lady bars are far too few, the Town House has attained classic homecoming status for the flirty, freaky, and friendly. Near the Hamline station in St. Paul, this dark bar with dive-appropriate prices flaunts drag queens and kings every Wednesday night, karaoke three nights a week, and Bingo on Fridays to benefit the Aliveness Project, a community center for people living with HIV. Extra hospitality includes pool tables, darts, a patio for smokers, and the cheapest, greasiest pub grub you'll ever need. There are ample girls who like girls, girls who bring their boyfriends, girls in wifebeaters and leather, girls in plaid with oversized glasses, drunk girls who give each other fishtails, trans girls, trans boys, and boys who like to dress up as girls. Straight people are welcome too. No one's going to look twice. The bartenders are lovely. Bring cash.

BEST PLACE TO MEET SINGLE WOMEN (STRAIGHT)

Spring Street Tavern

355 MONROE ST. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-627-9123

www.springstreettavern.com

Diamonds are cool and stuff, but women also love Big Buck Hunter, strong bloodies, and wordplay. In the basement of Spring Street, Club Underground hosts acronym battles and the Pundemonium pun slam every third Wednesday of the month, where sharp-tongued wordsmiths skewer each other with double entendre. It's all very risqué. Upstairs, it's loud and boisterous over the weekends, casual and intimate

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MINNESOTA LOTTERY

and stacked with regulars on weeknights. The summer patio scene is serious, steeped in clouds of cigarette smoke and rampant with friendly, drunken banter. It's not a bad bar at which to hang out alone with a book, or challenge a first date to pool and darts. There's a lot to do, and the drinks are cheap.

BEST PLACE TO PEOPLE-WATCH

Minnesota State Fair

1265 SNELLING AVE. N.
ST. PAUL
651-288-4400
www.mnstatefair.org

The Great Minnesota Get-Together knows no cultural bounds. In the parking lot, Dodge Rams from Blaine pull up next to Priuses from Linden Hills; fixies from Northeast are chained next to Range Rovers from Minnetonka. The roiling stew of humanity bakes under the relentless August sun for two weeks, its individual parts lured to St. Paul by a mutual appreciation for deep-fried what-have-yous, butter sculptures, seed artwork, conceptual-looking chickens, gleaming farm machinery, far-flung concerts, rides, games, and the dependably upsetting Miracle of Birth barn. It's the ultimate recipe for people-watching. Even barking politicians can't dissuade the demographic-spanning unity of the Minnesota State Fair, which drew its fourth-highest attendance ever in 2015: 1.8 million beautiful specimens. It's the same amazing party we've been attending since 1859, and we'll never stop.

Readers' Choice: Minnesota State Fair

BEST PLACE TO MAKE OUT

Behind any dumpster

Past winners for this category have included the Minneapolis Institute of Art (or "mee-uh," as its grand marketing czar has demanded of us) and Lake Harriet. Ya know, places where you can be seen — by people! Our editorial position circa 2016? Gross! Dumpsters, those invaluable receptacles for our waste, also double as ideal tongue-wrestling destinations, especially for those not wanting to foist their slippery affections on the unwilling public. Covertly tucked away in alleys, the humble dumpster will shield you from view near just about any Twin Cities location where you find yourself drunk, amorous, and in need of immediate release. Think of them as the free Ubers of kissing... or something. Down by the train tracks was a close runner-up.

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www.fatnatseggs.com

If you're looking for a fancy-schmancy brunch place, keep moving. If, however, you're looking for a breakfast joint that embraces the term "greasy spoon" as a badge of honor, come on in, grab a seat at one of the formica tables, and dig in. Portions are generous, the staff is friendly and efficient, and the coffee cups are always full. The New Hope location, opened in 2003, is the original and largest of the three Fat Nat's restaurants, and despite its 160-person seating capacity, be prepared for a wait on weekends. For traditionalists, the menu has above-average iterations of the usual suspects: pancakes, omelets, corned beef hash, and eggs. But there are pleasant surprises, too, like the seven (seven!) kinds of eggs Benedict. And there's no better hangover cure than Fat Nat's slider, a.k.a. lazy man's Benedict: a grilled cheese, ham, and egg served over hash browns and doused with hollandaise sauce.

Readers' Choice: Keys Cafe

BEST DINER

Nighthawks

3753 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-248-8111

www.nighthawksmpls.com

As diner names go, there's no more ambitious one than this, with its title lifted from the iconic Edward Hopper painting of nocturnal New Yorkers gathered around a counter. The hot new south Minneapolis offering from Landon Schoenefeld, an artist in his own right, lives up to the billing. Expect expertly done and piled-high tuna melts and pastrami sandwiches, all-day breakfast – stacked pancakes come plain or loaded with filings – and nightly specials like spaghetti and meatballs, fish and chips, or meatloaf. But it's not all nostalgia. Vegetarians will be welcomed and thrilled with dishes like the raw vegetable salad, a spicy deep-fried cauliflower, or a carrot "dog." Wash it down with tap beer, or one of their creative beer- or wine-based cocktails, and take in the sights and sounds of the diner on a weeknight. Hopper's painting looks dreary by comparison. Somebody oughta paint this.

Readers' Choice: Mickey's Diner

BEST CURE FOR A HANGOVER

Harvey Wallbanger at Ward 6

858 PAYNE AVE.
ST. PAUL
651-348-8181

www.ward6stpaul.com

The cocktail cognoscenti decry this disco-era original as helping bring about the dark ages of imbibing – that 30-year period when Old Fashioneds gave way to Appletinis. They're absolutely right. But who the hell cares when it's Sunday morning, your head's pounding, and the smell of shame and regret is seeping from your pores? The Harvey Wallbanger wakes up the dreadfully boring Screwdriver with a float of herbaceous Galliano — that towering, svelte bottle collecting dust on the backbar. The OJ and vodka provide the vitamin C the body craves after a rough night and the booze needed to short-term-fix that headache. But the anise-laden and faintly vanilla-y liqueur actually gives it some flavor. Replace the vodka with aquavit for a much improved caraway complement.

BEST COFFEE SHOP

Bob's Java Hut

2651 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-4485

www.bobsjavahut.com

South Minneapolis is more hoity-toity by the year. Fancy restaurants like Heyday and Scena are fine additions for foodies, but their arrival also signals a transition to a more refined, less gritty past. In the face of this perfumed wave, the CC Club bar is one holdout. Bob's is another. Since the mid-'90s, the joint takes all kinds from the neighborhood: On any given morning, its clients are old couples, punks, or hipsters. Of course, what makes Bob's unique is its special appeal to bikers, who line up their choppers out front, grab benches out there, and down cup after cup as they chat about life on two wheels. Some favor the Japanese-made "crotch rocket" speed machines, while others like riding a huge hog; leather's a must. Inside, buy a can of Bob's to take home, and the instructions will tell you it's best enjoyed with a ciga-

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rette, just like most of the bikers take it. It's subversive. Gritty. Don't go changing all the way just yet, South Side.

Readers' Choice: Spyhouse

BEST BAKERY

Patisserie 46

4552 GRAND AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-354-3257

www.patisserie46.com

Patisserie 46 is like that one bakery you loved in Paris because of its impossibly technical French pastry work. Canelé boast a tender custard center and a thick caramelized crust. Éclairs are crafted with choux dough delicate as springtime dew with will-diminishing chocolate crème pâtissière. Madeleines, those seemingly uncomplicated shells of genoise, are perfectly airy, spongy, and deceptively complicated to get right. And now, you can buy the best chocolate cake in the country, as deemed by the Coupe du Monde, the official deemers of such matters. The top layer of 72 percent chocolate ganache gleams like polished chestnut. Beneath that, a half inch of mousse gives way to a flourless chocolate sponge cake and then more ganache. A lower level of pecan crumble (toasted and ground pecans, butter, flour, and fleur de sel, all enrobed in chocolate) is as fun to eat as Cocoa Krispies. Get a single slice of this masterpiece for the ridiculous bargain of $5.25.

BEST DOUGHNUTS

A Baker's Wife

4200 S. 28TH AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-729-6898

Doughnuts have gone the way of the cupcake. Lost to the kitsch of cognac jellies and meat infusions, this poor man's pleasure has become a high-dollar novelty. But the days of the $6 dozen are not over in the Twin Cities. South Minneapolis' A Baker's Wife is more revered for its lemon squares than its doughnuts, but owners Gary Tolle and Margaret Mossberg Tolle make superlative, dunkable rings of fried batter that put overproduced, epicurean Frankensteins on notice. The mastery is undisguised. Even when they're rolled in cinnamon sugar or smeared with chocolate ganache, you can always taste the carefully browned cake beneath the accoutrements. They're a reminder of what heights minimalism can achieve.

Readers' Choice: Glam Doll Donuts

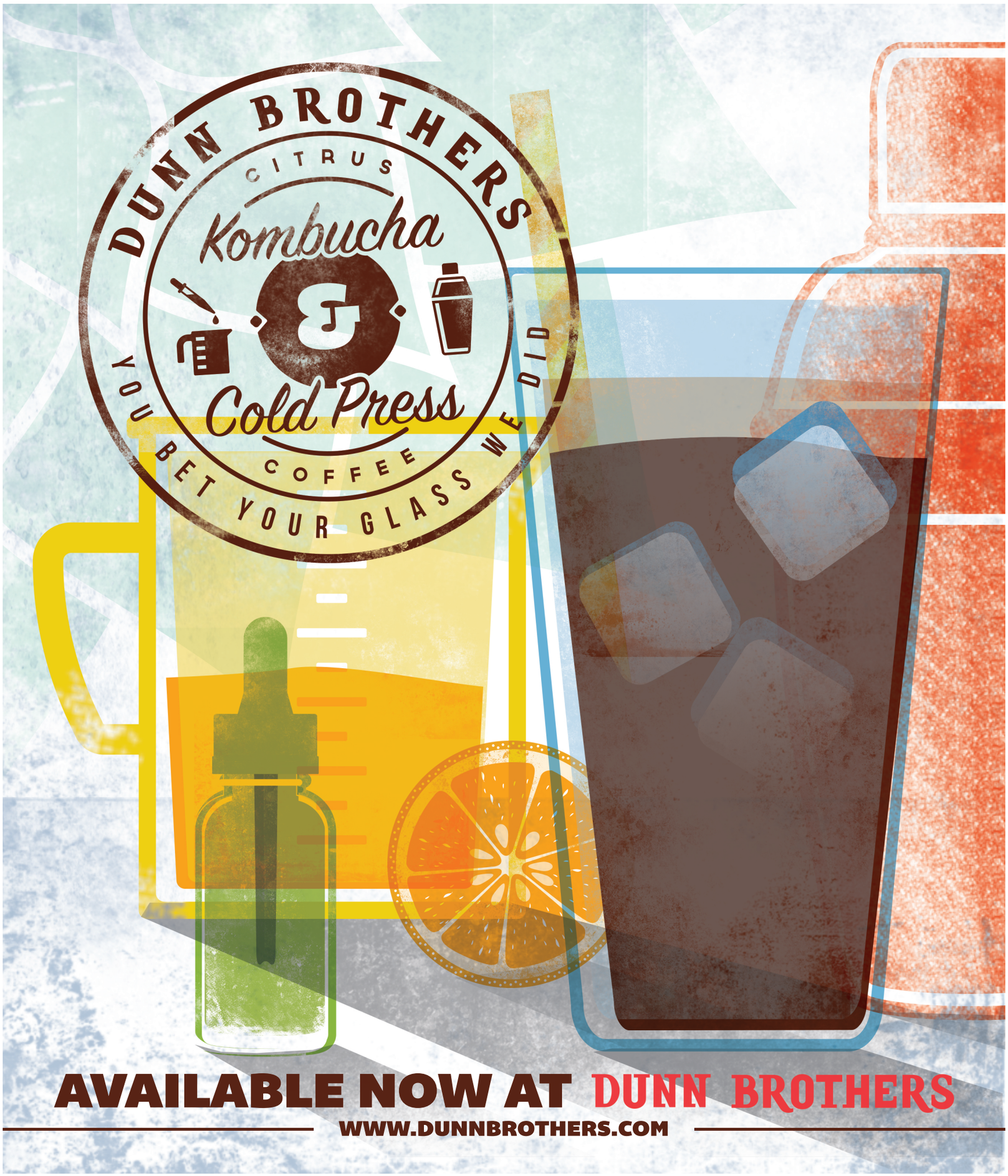
BEST BAGELS

St. Paul Bagelry

1702 LEXINGTON AVE. N.
ROSEVILLE
651-488-1700

www.stpaulbagelry.com

Although we live in cities with sensational culinary offerings, when it comes to bagels, we have some definite... holes. So when something comes along as rare and special (think Hope Diamond, think Halley's Comet, think finding free street parking in Uptown) as the St. Paul Bagelry, we must stand up and take note. Soft, chewy, warm bagels with a generous slathering of delectable homemade cream cheese are served by happy dough-slingers. Seating is plentiful, the decor simple. If you don't have time to stay and sit a while, you can grab some to go and impress your friends with a dozen decadent, dreamy breakfast carbs from an unexpected source. And sure, the St. Paul Bagelry is not technically in St. Paul, and we know it might be hard to make the trek to Roseville before 2 p.m. any day of the week, but in this instance, you will be rewarded handsomely.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BEST BLOODY MARY

Psycho Suzi's

1900 MARSHALL ST. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-788-9069

www.psychosuzis.com

Most brunch items are better left to the professionals. Home cooks burn their hashbrowns and dry out their sausage; who's got the balls to try Hollandaise? The Bloody Mary is different. Every consumer knows his or her own preferred mix, with just the right levels of tomato-y thickness, heat, salt, and citrus. Psycho Suzi's wisely turns over their Bloody making to the masses. They get you started with a healthy slug of vodka and directions to the Bloody bar, and you take it from there. The selections offer premade store brands or plain tomato juice, but the housemade mix is a winner. From there, zest things up yourself with a variety of hot sauces and floating spice-bombs like diced garlic and horseradish. Add all the olives, cheese squares, and salami you can fit on a stick. Return to the table knowing you've done your part. Make a mistake? Learn from it. Try again. You're the only one who really knows how you want it.

Readers' Choice: Hell's Kitchen

BEST BRUNCH

Burch Steak and Pizza

1933 COLFAX AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-843-1500

www.burchrestaurant.com

Enjoying the refined elegance of brunch at Burch, you may have to check your calendar and watch to confirm that it is in fact Sunday morning, and you are not, in fact, at a sophisticated weekend dinner. Here, old favorites become elevated: A croque madame is mounted with lobster; the brunch burger is pattied with famed Wagyu beef; and one of the many Bloody Mary iterations gets a smoky shot of Mezcal. Even the ubiquitous bagel with smoked salmon gets a homemade bagel. The whole of it is like brunch grabbed its clutch purse and pearls and decided to step out, and step up. It's only a shame these elegant dishes are relegated to but four hours per week, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays only. Bust out that calendar again, and draw a big red "X." Set an alarm. Sunday morning is now an event.

Readers' Choice: Hell's Kitchen

BEST PANCAKES

Nighthawks

3753 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-248-8111

www.nighthawksmpls.com

Nighthawks is so confident in its pancake prowess that it serves them in no fewer than eight iterations. The plain buttermilk are invitingly bready, tangy, and fragrant. The peanut butter and chocolate chip will be your knee-buckling dessert-breakfast. The bacon, kimchi, and scallion variety will weaken your low-carb resolve. To those options, add banana pecan, blueberry lemon, even chorizo, cheddar, and corn. A short stack is $8, and arrives with whipped butter and real maple syrup. Eight bucks, eight varieties of pancakes so good you'll want to have them eight days a week. All pancakes, all the time.

Readers' Choice: Original Pancake House

BEST LUNCH

The Himalayan

2910 E. LAKE ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-332-0880

www.himalayanmomo.com

A good lunch has to complete the perfect trifecta of fast, cheap, and delicious. The Himalayan nails all of these so hard it's not even a contest. Every day except Monday, a hot and ready lunch buffet simmers away in the corner of this Longfellow favorite, the table groaning under the weight of too many things to attempt in one visit. It's an all-you-can eat feast of chili chicken, fried okra, fried potatoes, curries, salad bar, roti, several rice dishes, aloo tama, and more. And it all comes for $10.95. The Himalayan employs separate chefs to specialize in Indian, Tibetan, and Nepalese cuisine. Three chefs, countless dishes, 11 bucks.

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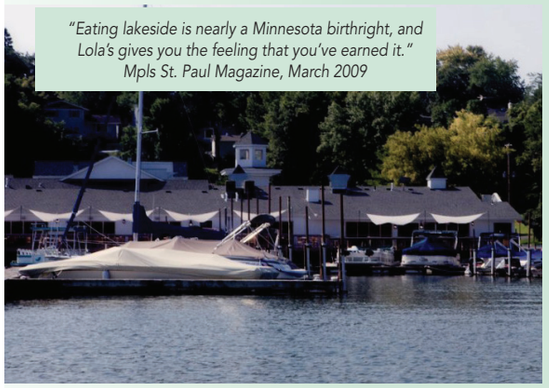

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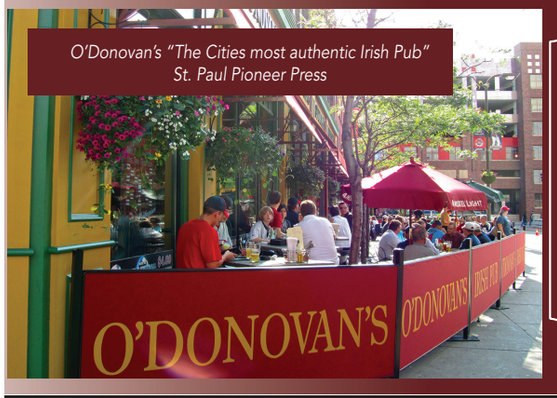

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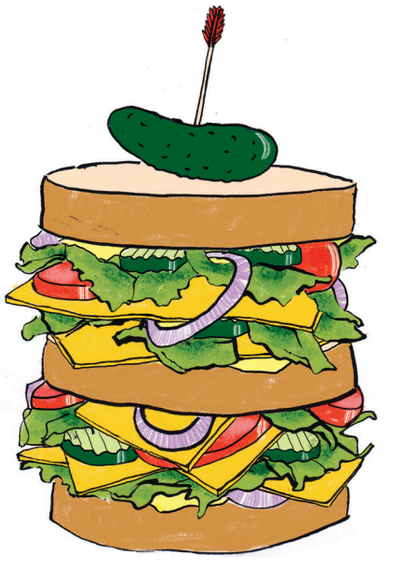

BEST SANDWICH

Lowry Hill Meats

1934 HENNEPIN AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-999-4200
www.lowryhillmeats.com

How good is a house if it's made out of cards? Not good at all. The same goes for a sandwich: The foundation must be sound. At Lowry Hill Meats, a sandwich begins with quality, ends with quality, and squishes quality in between. A butcher first, Lowry Hill is a purveyor of locally sourced, sustainably and humanely raised meats. The pork yields fat back an inch thick and the color of driven snow. The beef is red and lively. The sausages are fragrant with fresh herbs. They take all of this and shove it into good bread. Little more is needed— just some local butter, possibly a dusting of cheese. It's handed to you by a guy in an apron who all but raised the beast. He'll make eye contact. It's called pride. And it's delicious.

BEST CRAWL

Taco Tour on Lake Street

www.tacotouronlakestreet.com

The best crawls are the ones you can recreate whenever the mood strikes. On June 27, a sponsored crawl took over 2,500 people down the Lake Street corridor, hitting nine restaurants and, no doubt, washing it down with a little Pepto. The Taco Tour on Lake Street is by shuttle, bike, or foot, making it an easy one to join, and the fact that it takes place during peak summer makes us love it even more. But don't fret if you miss it — this tour can be done anytime, any weekend, with all your friends and shorter lines. Be inspired to forge your own tasty path. Though if you choose the organized route, it comes with a couple free tacos.

BEST POP-UP RESTAURANT

Cook St. Paul

1124 PAYNE AVE.
ST. PAUL
651-756-1787
www.cookstp.com

Drive down Payne Avenue in St. Paul on any given Friday night and you'll likely find a line snaking out the door of tiny Cook St. Paul. It's not unheard of for hundreds of people to show up at one of the restaurant's uber popular dinner pop-ups. The menu and guest chefs change every week (find the latest information on the restaurant's Facebook page), and the pop-up theme ranges from Mediterranean feast to pizza night. Lately, it's been all about different Asian cuisines, including Vietnamese and Filipino, as well as Korean served up by owner Eddie Wu. Prices are surprisingly reasonable and the food is worth the wait. A recent takeover by Union Kitchen included an $8 crawfish banh mi and $12 Hmong fried rice with smoked pork belly; another Friday menu by Wu featured gochu chicken wings for $9 and bindaetteok, mung bean pancakes with spicy cabbage and seasoned pork, for just $6.

BEST SKYWAY EATS

Ho Fan

444 CEDAR ST. #225
ST. PAUL
651-227-9677

Skip the chain sandwich joints where your lunch is slapped together by an apathetic teen. The unassuming Ho Fan food counter is definitely the best deal, and among the best meals, in the whole downtown St. Paul area. The ready-made lunch options are just fine, but if you've got all of five minutes, it's worth your time to get something made to order. For, behind the counter, a tough-looking chef is grinding away, churning out stir fries and fresh soups as a team of one. Fish curry, black pepper shrimp, and pho come steaming into the pass-through window and are handed out in enormous portions. The chef will eye his next customer, ask how spicy they want it, and return to his scorching wok. If you're in such a hurry that you must forgo his services, grab a couple of the to-go spring rolls, which come thickly stuffed with noodles and shrimp or chicken. Your immature co-workers will snicker at the name when they ask you where you got your food. You will take one look at what you got, and snicker at the crap they're eating for lunch.

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD CAFÉ (ST. PAUL)

Trotter's Cafe

232 CLEVELAND AVE. N.
ST. PAUL
651-645-8950

www.trotterscafe.com

Trotter's Cafe has been a fixture in St. Paul's Merriam Park neighborhood for 27 years, offering breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a place to gather. From the well-worn floors to the counter service, there's nothing pretentious about the place. Nor are there any airs about the food, which includes all the breakfast basics plus a lunch and dinner menu heavy on soups, salads, sandwiches, and burgers. Dishes are made with care; stocks for the soups, salad dressings, and whole grain breads are prepared from scratch in-house. The restaurant was ahead of the curve in using regional and organic ingredients, and a colorful chalkboard lists the local products used on the menu. From donating to food shelves to sponsoring local music nights and monthly art exhibits, Trotter's is part of the fabric of the community.

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD CAFÉ (MINNEAPOLIS)

Birchwood Cafe

3311 E. 25TH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-722-4474

www.birchwoodcafe.com

Birchwood Cafe celebrated its 20th anniversary last year, following a major renovation fueled by a Kickstarter campaign that raised over $100,000 from the restaurant's fans. That's loyalty. But it's not just the local, sustainable, organic menu that inspires rabid devotion among customers and neighbors. It's also owner Tracy Singleton's commitment to putting her principles to work by championing issues both local and national. She's an advocate for healthier foods in schools and a vocal force in the movement to label GMOs. The restaurant sponsors a bike team, holds film screenings, and televises presidential debates. Birchwood is also setting the bar for composting, recycling, and renewable energy. All this while remaining committed to serving "good real food." Birchwood is justly famed for its savory waffle (available all day), each quadrant topped with a different goodie — egg on one, bacon lardoons on another, a seasonal preserve, and maple syrup for good measure. Grab a light lunch or dinner of soup and salad, or enjoy a burger or a grilled New York strip and fries. Whether you're gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, or a devoted carnivore, you'll find a favorite here.

BEST DELICATESSEN

Lowry Hill Meats

1934 HENNEPIN AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-999-4200

www.lowryhillmeats.com

We haven't seen another butcher shop quite like this one. The walk-in cooler is enclosed in glass, for a clear view of what you're actually getting. Every week, a whole cow, hog, goat, and lamb are delivered and broken down into everything from pork chops to kidneys to sweetbreads. Most of the butchers also have a chef's background, so they know just what to do with all of this meaty bounty, turning it into pâté, whitefish salad, bolognese, lard, the best sandwiches in town, blood sausage, liver mousse, and more. The animals are all sourced from local farms, and treated with the utmost care care and respect. Chances are high that these creatures had only one bad day — and that tastes a hell of a lot better than the alternative.

BEST CHARCUTERIE

The Draft Horse

117 14TH AVE. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-208-1476

www.thedrafthorsempls.com

When you share a building with Red Table Meats, you've got a good head start on putting together an outstanding charcuterie platter. The meat plate at the Draft Horse takes full advantage of having Mike Phillips' production facility as a neighbor. The menu doesn't constrain itself by listing any particular meats, the better to take advantage of whatever the current bounty includes. You'll likely get to try some salami, maybe Big Chet's, a hot finocchiona-style salami redolent of fennel and garlic, or perhaps the Vecchio, with black pepper, garlic, and white wine. There might be slices of speck, a dry-cured, smoked ham, or Coppa, dry-cured pork shoulder rubbed with juniper, coriander, and crushed red pepper. The meats are artfully presented on a rustic wooden board accompanied by house-made pickles. It's a simple but lovely start to a meal, a perfect happy-hour nosh, or a satisfying late-night snack. And why stop there? The to-go case is stocked with Red Table Meats that you can take home and enjoy whenever you need a porky pick-me-up.

BEST NEW RESTAURANT

St. Genevieve

5003 BRYANT AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-353-4843

www.facebook.com/stgenevieve

It should go without saying that in order to be great, a restaurant has to have it all: food, hospitality, atmosphere, value. The pieces must be working perfectly in sync, consistently, constantly. And then there are the little intangibles, the minuscule touches, dreamy things that vault a place from great to exquisite. St. Genevieve rises to this level. Its ethos is that of an all-day French buvette where you come to meet friends midday and never want to leave. The interior is all beveled mirrors, dreamy ivory bar, and golden light, impressive enough to evoke an admiring whistle. On the plate are ethereal takes on French classics both approachable and altogether novel. In the glass, lots and lots of bubbly wine. In your heart, love.

Readers' Choice: The Draft Horse

BEST RESTAURANT MINNEAPOLIS

Restaurant Alma

528 UNIVERSITY AVE. SE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-379-4909

www.restaurantalma.com

Restaurants come and restaurants go. But not Alma. Staying power like this is rare. The quiet stalwart has been open for 17 years. At first it seemed to serve visiting parents of University of Minnesota students, or maybe natty professors with relatively bulky wallets. But since then, it's become the site of engagements, anniversaries, and celebrations galore. More often than that, it's the understated weeknight dinner spot that makes an ordinary Wednesday an occasion. The food is consistently excellent — ingredient-driven without being boring, inventive without being showy. The prices are middling enough not to alienate. The servers are the sort who remember, even if it's been half a year since your last visit. The room is banal enough so you know: It's about you and your company, not the decor. They've got big plans, including a casual cafe with all-day eggs and pastries, plus a handful of guest rooms upstairs. Indeed Alma is a place so pitch perfect, you never want to go home. And soon you won't have to.

Readers' Choice: Spoon and Stable

BEST RESTAURANT ST. PAUL

Saint Dinette

261 E. FIFTH ST.
ST. PAUL
651-800-1415

www.saintdinette.com

Not every establishment is a resonant reflection of its geography. Saint Dinette is. For those of us who know the saintly city, and know it well, this menu of dilly beans, tuna casserole, and fried smelt will unearth cherished memories of Sunday dinners at the lake. But that doesn't mean this is a small-town kind of place. Quite the opposite. If Saint Dinette has done anything, it's upped the ante on what St. Paul can and should do. Because next to the smelt, find remoulade, thick and rich as butter. In the casserole, find good Pecorino and fancy Campanelle pasta. Find hospitality the likes of which you only get at grandma and grandpa's cabin, but in a posh dining room that frames the way St. Paul is growing up, and growing up fast. None of this means

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you have to put down your PBR. They've got those too, for three bucks a can.

Readers' Choice: Brasa Rotisserie

BEST RESTAURANT WORTH THE DRIVE

L'Etoile du Nord

320 FIFTH AVE. N.
BAYPORT
651-439-7507

www.letoiledunordcafe.com

Who would have thought you could drive to Belgium from the Twin Cities? You can in just 30 short minutes, or better yet, you could bike it. L'Etoile du Nord is the life's work of Olivier Vrambout, a Belgian-born chef and baker, as well as an avid cyclist and dad. His almost impossibly idyllic Bayport cafe is piece of Belgium in flyover country. Here, Liege waffles meet the best brownie the world has ever seen, plus coffee roasted on site. There is wood-fired pizza, frosty chalices of Belgian beers, and French toast made from brioche. Each and every little thing is scratch made, impeccably sourced, and personally attended to — down to the bike-themed wallpaper that urges you to leave the car in the garage and take two wheels to the St. Croix River Valley. It only takes two hours if you keep a good clip. And the post-ride beer tastes so much better that way.

BEST CHEF

Thomas Boemer

The average chef is lucky to achieve greatness at one establishment. Thomas Boemer has risen to the ranks of "best" at two places: Corner Table, a fine-dining powerhouse that masquerades as a humble little neighborhood cafe; and Revival, our town's most true-blue Southern/soul food restaurant, where diners wait up to two hours for a table. But that ain't all. Boemer is also the 2015 national king of all things pork, thanks to his win at the big Cochon 555 competition in Aspen. He's hinted that he's got more up his sleeve, but we hope he doesn't do too much too soon. It might put a dent in his time and his penchant for being an honest-to-goodness nice guy.

BEST RESTAURANT TO TAKE OUT-OF-TOWNERS

Half Time Rec

1013 FRONT AVE.
ST. PAUL
651-488-8245

www.halftimerec.com

We in the Twin Cities are a multifaceted people. We tend to like things simple, humble, and with as few frills as possible. But that doesn't mean we don't deserve to be happy. The Half Time Rec falls perfectly into that sweet spot. From the outside, it doesn't look like much. Hell, it doesn't from the inside, either. It's just a classic neighborhood bar with hockey on the TV and old beer signs on the walls. But then you see the menu, a mouth-watering array of classed-up Irish pub food crafted by big-deal chef Jack Riebel, formerly of Butcher and the Boar. Of course, you could take your visitors there, or to any number of other swanky joints. But you can get that experience in any city in America. This one, a perfect blend of blue-ribbon food and blue-collar digs, can only be found here.

BEST RESTAURANT TO TAKE YOUR KIDS

Surly Brewing Co.

520 MALCOLM AVE. SE
MINNEAPOLIS
763-999-4040

www.surlybrewing.com

There's a magical quality to the joyous noise within the busy, cavernous Surly Beer Hall: It's easy to hear the conversation at your own table, but all the surrounding voices recede into a pleasant white-noise din. It means that one couple can be chatting through a romantic date, happily oblivious to the family with giggling preschoolers sitting a row or two over. Add in all the bustle of folks waiting at the bar, lining up for tours, and hanging out by the windows overlooking the large outdoor space, and your kids aren't gonna bother anybody. There's even plenty of room for wandering the aisles, which will be appreciated by the adult stuck with

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infant-calming duties. The well-underage are clearly welcome here: There's a waiting area helpfully stocked with books, and once your kids are seated a server will bestow upon them a cute retro lunchbox filled with crayons and building toys. Children's menu items are generously portioned, but the younger set might be just as eager to sample from shared plates: Cornbread, gnocchi, and giant pretzels are right up their alley. And of course there's the full complement of excellent Surly beers in various flavors, pour sizes, and alcohol content, which parents should enjoy guilt-free: You earned 'em.

BEST SERVICE

Gorkha Palace

23 FOURTH ST. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-886-3451

www.gorkhapalace.com

When a restaurant is filing diners into seats like sardines in a can, it's easy for service staff to become harried. Table 12 needs their gimlet, 14 doesn't have silverware, and there's a spill at the bar. Who has time for niceties? Gorkha Palace does. Northeast Minneapolis' Indian and Tibetan gem may be wildly popular, but servers still find time to treat guests like family. Maybe that's because they all feel like a family themselves. "I asked my boss if I could work here forever," our server told us after we commented on our excellent treatment. Not only are they kind and swift, but their expertise at describing differences among, say, Chyau Takari, Aahloo Bindi, and Hariyo Saag is second to none. They know this food. "I come in here on my day off to eat," our server explained. "I can't stay away." Neither can we.

Readers' Choice: Manny's Steakhouse

BEST RESTAURANT FOR ROMANCE

Grand Cafe

3804 GRAND AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-822-8260

www.grandcafempls.com

Nobody does ambiance with the aplomb of Grand Cafe. Nobody has the time, because the bread oven is acting wonky again and the hostess just quit. Somehow Grand Cafe still manages to dig out the real silver candelabras, to tie bows onto the flower vases, to iron the creases out of white linens. On Sunday nights, local piano legend Cornbread Harris plays live while silent films dance on the wall. The cooking is timeless Mediterranean elegance: individually stuffed agnolotti in black truffle vinaigrette; tremblingly tender short ribs in chile-raisin puree; sourdough bread baked on site. Slow, gentle, can't-rush-it things. Romantic things.

Readers' Choice: W.A. Frost

BEST RESTAURANT FOR A FIRST DATE

Burch Steak and Pizza

1933 COLFAX AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-843-1515

www.burchrestaurant.com

First dates are high pressure. Relax, Burch has it all: Steak. Pizza. Oysters. A host of culinary delights from the James Beard Award-winning chef, Isaac Becker. The Lowry Hill anchor comprises two floors, with a sleek and sophisticated dining room upstairs and a pizza cave downstairs. Choose your own date vibe: upscale or casual, romantic or sexy. Both floors have bars, so start at one of them, where you can have a damn fine cocktail and go your separate ways if things aren't panning out. If the stars are aligning, see if the host can squeeze you in at a table for two in the pizza cave. If you can't make sparks fly while you share one of these stellar wood-fired pies, it wasn't meant to be.

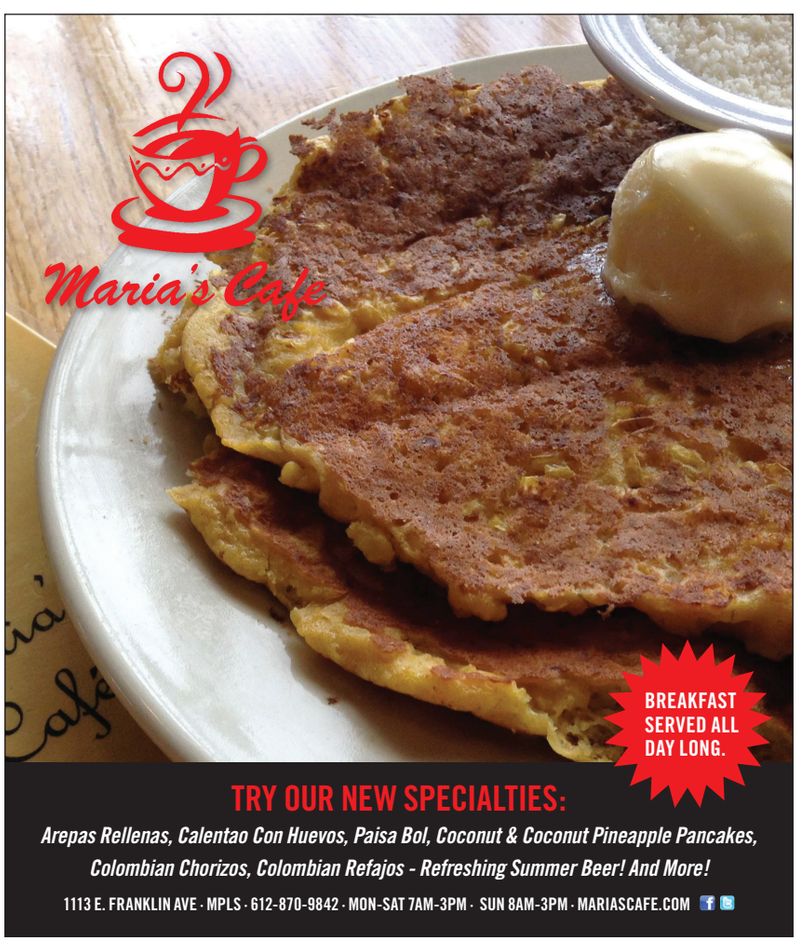
BEST-LOOKING RESTAURANT

Eastside

305 WASHINGTON AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-208-1638

www.eastsidempls.com

At the base of the Latitude 45 apartment building, Eastside is the picture of grandi-



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osity, a brushstroke of elegance at the east end of Washington Avenue in downtown Minneapolis. The tile floor alone, black on white in a dreamy, undulating pattern, will itself inspire 10,000 shoe selfies. Floor-to-ceiling windows with a yellow panel of stained glass above bathe the room in golden light, as if every moment of the day were sunset. The streamlined bar and open kitchen are all dark wood, steel, and testosterone, and the place is so expansive and open, so soaring and imposing, you could think of landing a private jet within. For further proof of this spare-no-expense room, check out the brass foot rest at the bar: A winged Pegasus awaits the dusty sole of your boot.

BEST VIEW

4 Bells

1610 HARMON PL.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-904-1163

www.4bells.com

Minnesotans are a hardy bunch, and we don't let the cold and snow trap us inside. But there are certain things you can only do outside when the weather cooperates, and one of the most pleasant is to sit and sip cocktails in the sun while taking in the scenery. And the prettiest place to do that is on the rooftop at 4 Bells in Loring Park. The second-story deck is a comely space in its own right, with lush flower boxes and comfortable seating, but it's the cityscape vistas that make it unique. Face south and you're rewarded with views of the Minneapolis version of Central Park in all its verdant summertime glory; you might also get an earful from the enthusiastic participants in the pickup games on the basketball court. If you reposition your chair, you can get a nice angle on the downtown skyline as you enjoy one of the bar's draft cocktails. Oh, and Fido is welcome, so you don't have to sneak him in in your bag.

BEST-LOOKING BAR

Mancini's Char House

531 W. SEVENTH ST.
ST. PAUL
651-224-7345

www.mancinis.com

Our time-capsule establishments are precious gems, too often treasured when it's too late. See the demise of Nye's, Bonnie's Cafe, Peter's Grill, and a host of others for evidence. And no matter how many design teams a new place may employ, rarely can they evoke the transporting experience of a quinquagenarian like Mancini's. Most establishments open for more than a decade buckle under the urge to remodel. Not here. The Vegas-style lounge welcomes like a satiny bosom. There are no windows, there are no clocks. The color scheme ranges from red to redder. Round lounge chairs envelop like Santa's lap, with the promise of much finer treats than he ever brought. Drinks are strong and at working-man's prices, while the dance floor hosts everyone from elegant ballroom steppers to 20-somethings shaking it to a live band. The stadium-style red vinyl booths offer a clear view of the excitement, illuminated by the light of cabaret bulbs. Here's to hoping Mancini's never changes a fiber of its headache-inducing yet wholly alluring carpet pattern.

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD BAR, MINNEAPOLIS

Schooner Tavern

2901 27TH AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-729-4365

www.schoonertavern.com

The Schooner is the nexus of drinkeries, the boozy intersection of three neighborhoods: hip, eclectic Seward; the residential, quiet Longfellow; and the funky, gritty East Lake Street. Too many bars seem to attract just one crowd; the Schooner seems to attract them all. It's got the oldest liquor license in the city, and as the screen door slams behind you, that fact is readily apparent. Two bars sandwich the stage, where live rhythm and blues will have you wondering whether you've crossed a space-time continuum into vintage New Orleans. The Schooner brings you this pleasure six nights a week, always cover-free. The $3.75 drink specials rotate during the week, except on Friday when it's free hot dog night. It makes good fuel for your dancing feet, or your billiards prowess, or just for holding up the bar, Prohibition style. The folks at Schooner have been doing it since 1932.

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD BAR, ST. PAUL

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ST. PAUL
651-228-9925

www.crnook.com

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out really trying too hard. Depending on the hour, Shamrocks is a place you could bring your kid for a burger, or get ripped while playing pulltabs — without feeling scuzzy either time. The Irish-ish sports bar peddles the same gooey, not-too-fussy burgers as jointly owned institution the Nook, and they hold their own in a "chef-driven" world. Here old-timers with bowling bags and twentysomethings with corporate badges commingle over Summits, trivia, and $2 burgers (8:30-11 p.m. Mondays). This bibulous bastion's community pride runs as deep as the 1988 Cretin-Durham Hall state championship hockey jersey hanging on the wall.

BEST SPORTS BAR

Mac's Industrial

312 CENTRAL AVE. SE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-379-3379

www.macsindustrial.com

How many televisions does it take to make a sports bar? All the televisions. Mac's Industrial knows the score. Literally. Because if there's an athletic competition in progress, chances are it will be on and riling fans from every corner of the room. There are even a few little screens next to the bar for the desperate lone wolf trying to catch an obscure NCAA basketball game on a Vikings/Gophers/Wild game night. A sizeable beer list, strong rail drinks, and killer bar food — including an excellent Reuben and one of the best tuna melts in town — make this a place to stay a while. And some Sundays, you just have to stay a while.

Readers' Choice: Herkimer Pub & Brewery

BEST DRUNK FOOD

Taco Cat

920 E. LAKE ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-723-5388

www.tacocatmn.com

It's Saturday and you started tying one on at 4. By 10 p.m., you've nailed your rendition of Rihanna's "Work," and you're pretty sure your living room walls are swaying along. Let's get some food in you, shall we? With a name so simple a baby could remember it, Taco Cat delivers straight to your door, so you won't be driving — or let's be honest, walking — anywhere to get grub. (They did open a permanent location in Midtown Global Market last fall, but you're not going anywhere, remember?) For $10 get the Outlaw, three slow-roasted pork tacos with kimchee, pickled jalapeño apple slaw, crema, and salsa verde. Or for a buck less, try the Larry, three tacos with a facepalm-simple yet delicious mix of chicken, chorizo, and cheese. Too fumbly to handle a bunch of open-ended tacos? We got you: A single, fat burrito is a two-hander, but approachable enough for the most inebriated inebriate, and comes in veggie, steak, chicken, or pork.

BEST LATE NIGHT

Nightingale

2551 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-354-7060

www.nightingalempls.com

In 2012, Nightingale opened to disprove the proviso that drunken idiots are doomed to mozzarella sticks and Heggies once the clock strikes midnight. The swank Uptown nosherie emphasizes small, sharable plates like chicken wings and bruschetta, but once late-night happy hour rolls around at 11 p.m. every night, patrons are urged by more epicurean delights like chicken liver pâté and smoked fish, all generously discounted for the wined-up and adventurous. Stumble over after getting tossed out of the CC Club and enjoy half a dozen $2 oysters — they'll be the one thing you remember the next morning when you wake up half-naked on the bathroom floor.

BEST BAR FOOD

Spoon and Stable

211 N. FIRST ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-224-9850

www.spoonandstable.com

Everyone wants the same things to eat when drinking, no matter how elegant, or inelegant, the drink: pork, pork, and more pork; deep-fried things; sliders; hot dogs, tacos, and French fries. Spoon and Stable, arguably Minneapolis' most elegant restaurant, may not seem like ground zero for such things. But it is. This citadel for fine classical French technique serves the best bar food we've ever tasted. The duck meatloaf sliders take inspiration from the chef's grandmother's down-home Minnesota recipe. The black truffle arancini are a fancy word for deep-fried risotto balls gushing with melted Fontina cheese. The fries are always hand-cut. Best of all, the prices rival the icky, sticky, prefab bar food you pay for almost anywhere ($7-$12) — which means the French technique is free, and you can afford another round.

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BEST HAPPY HOUR

Fuji Ya

600 W. LAKE ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-4055

www.fujiyasushi.com

You know how sushi never looks as filling as it is? That optical illusion is even more dangerous when the sushi comes at a 50 percent discount. From the minute Fuji Ya opens the doors, it's happy hour, meaning half-price maki for doorbusters and gads of other tempura-fried delights that fit better in your budget than your stomach. Five-dollar cocktails like the Coconut Fizz or the infamous Melon Cream Soda will do their best to penetrate the block of rice, ponzu, and seaweed in your system, but an equally seductive happy hour at night (9-11 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday and 8-11 Sunday) awaits after you've digested enough to get plastered in earnest.

Readers' Choice: Pat's Tap

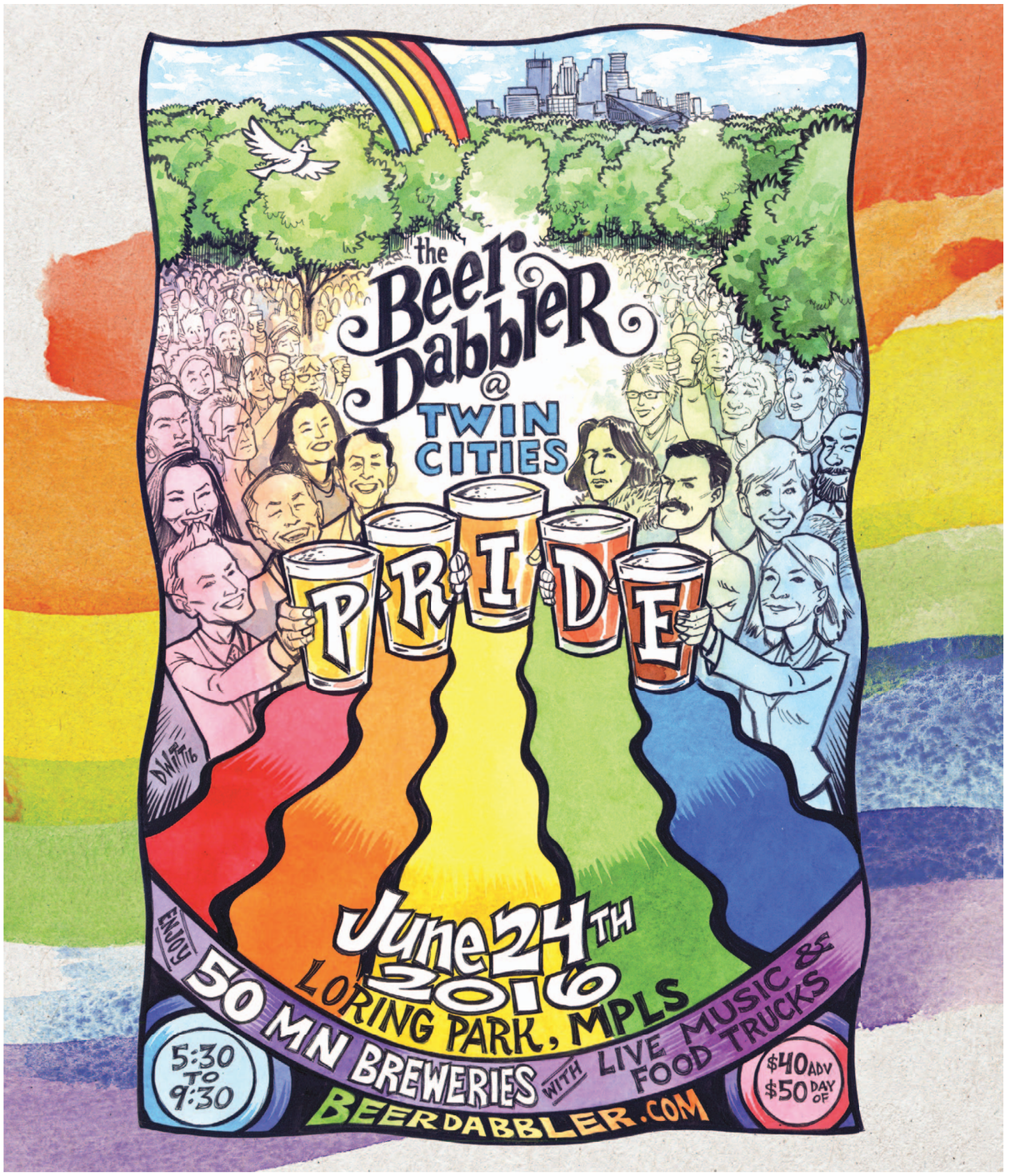
BEST GAY BAR

Lush

990 CENTRAL AVE. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-208-0358

www.lushmpls.com

This Northeast club isn't just a place to get cheap drinks and dance until you're a hot, sweaty mess. Lush has become something of a queer arts center, with burlesque, drag, live music, and a piano bar, all under one roof and open to all age groups and demographics. There are Broadway sing-alongs and queer trivia nights and go-go boys to ogle. Drag Queen Bingo revives the retirement-home diversion with fabulous results. The first Sunday of the month, Lush hosts a pajama brunch; every last Sunday of the month, Lush invites the whole family — kids included — for a Disney-themed event. This constant flow of events and happy hours is remarkable, but the best thing about Lush is its only rule: Everybody is welcome.



BEST DIVE BAR

Mortimer's

2001 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-872-1688

Halfway between a Brooklyn barcade and a boarded-up Detroit VFW, Mortimer's has long sat in the shadow of more notorious Uptown dives like Liquor Lyle's, CC Club, and the Red Dragon. Maybe it has something to do with its perpetually sticky floors or the fact that it's a cash-only bar. But fans know that everything about Mortimer's is endearingly low-budget. The cheap fake dart boards. The row of charmless, mass-market pinball machines. The cop-dark tinted windows. It makes you wanna gulp down the Grain Belt and $2 shots 'til the poorly lit room spins.

Readers' Choice: Grumpy's NE

BEST PUB, MINNEAPOLIS

Merlins Rest Pub

3601 E. LAKE ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-216-2419

www.merlinsrest.com

Belly up next to the friendly guy in the kilt or snag one of Merlins Rest's comfortably regal leather booths. The band, a.k.a. those guys sitting unassumingly at the front table, is about to start. The cozy British pub in working-class south Minneapolis is bustling and no one's zoning out staring at the TVs, because there are none. There is, however, an intriguing book going around that meticulously catalogs the best whiskey list in the state — a quiet, impressive feat for the neighborhood tavern. The 230-plus single malt whiskeys feel like owner Lee Tomlin's personal stash, which the scotch lover shares with neighbors by the dram or half dram. For those of us not making

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651-646-5551

www.thedublinerpub.com

There are three essential ingredients to a quality drinking establishment: a clientele that spans from the aged to the recently licensed to drink, friendly bartenders who won't leave you hanging on a refill, and a vibe without pretense or airs. This is the Dubliner in a nutshell. It's a no-frills place packed within the industrial district of western St. Paul. The beer is plentiful, the shots of respectable girth, and the atmosphere welcoming to one and all. It's not unusual to find bands of Irish dancers high-stepping across the floor. On most nights, traditional live music fills their air. Bagpipers in full regalia occasionally stop by. In other words, this isn't a joint that slaps up some shamrocks and a Guinness sign and calls itself Irish. This is the real McCoy, St. Paul-style. Which, according to four out of five leading barflies, is the best style ever invented.

BEST BARTENDER

Missy at Skarda's Bar

728 ARMSTRONG AVE. W.
ST. PAUL
651-224-0658

A good bartender is first and foremost a host, a person who makes the tavern your home-away-from-home. Too often in modern cocktail culture, the bartender gets so deeply engrossed in his craft that the hosting falls by the wayside. Not at Skarda's. At this workingman's neighborhood bar, Missy runs her party like a boss. And it's often an unpredictable party. On any given night she could be hosting a band of raucous twenty-something dudes, septuagenarian regulars from the neighborhood, and everyone in between. And she does it with the grace, charm, and poise of someone who really, really wants you in her house. This isn't the place to come searching for "craft" anything, but instead stiff pours of whatever you're drinking. Wine comes in house red and house white, served in a "jumbo fancy" glass for little more than you'll pay for a fancy water elsewhere.

BEST COCKTAILS

Bradstreet Neighborhood Craftshouse

1930 HENNEPIN AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-1200

www.bradstreetcraftshouse.com

Bradstreet's "Triptych Philosophy" — .75 ounces of citrus, .75 ounces of sugar, and two ounces of spirit — is one they believe yields the most perfectly balanced cocktail. They've turned us into believers. The deliciously simple equation has us kicking more complicated libations to the curb. Bradstreet cocktails contain no more than five ingredients, so there are fewer agonizing moments with your iPhone trying to determine what the hell kummel is and whether or not you'd like to drink it. Try the daiquiri, which Bradstreet bartenders say they get excited about each and every time they get to make one. It's .75 ounces of freshly squeezed lime juice, .75 ounces of simple syrup, and two ounces of Appleton white rum. That's it. The quintessential triptych, and the quintessential day-maker, no agonizing required.

Readers' Choice: Marvel Bar

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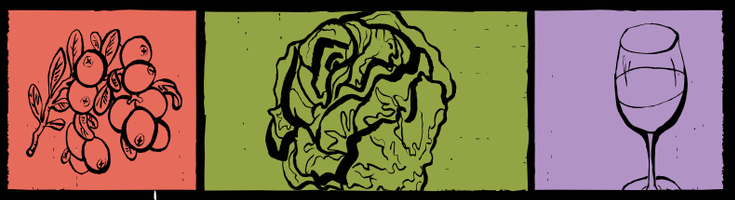

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BEST MARGARITA

Pancho Villa

2539 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-7014

www.panchovillasgrill.com

Pancho Villa, that Eat Street standby for your Mexican food fix, has an unexpected liquid gem on its menu: the organic margarita. Before you scoff at the idea of splurging on a premium margarita at a place that serves fried ice cream, take a look at the ingredients: organic tequila, fresh lime juice, and agave nectar. If a margarita can ever be called healthy, this would be the one — the more suave and sophisticated version of a cocktail that is so often nothing more than cheap tequila mixed with sickly-sweet sour mix. At $8.99, it's two bucks more than the house margarita, but as the Clairol commercial says, "You're worth it."

Readers' Choice: Barrio

BEST CRAFT DISTILLERY

Tattersall Distilling

1620 CENTRAL AVE. NE #150
MINNEAPOLIS
612-584-4152

www.tattersalldistilling.com

Longtime bartending stud Dan Oskey (Strip Club, Hola Arepa) managed to keep his distilling ambitions relatively quiet when he and his business partner/childhood pal Jon Kreidler started writing gin recipes. The cat's out of the bag now, and since doors opened to their standard-setting cocktail room last summer, Oskey and Kreidler's Tattersall hasn't cooled down. The handsomely casual Northeast distillery is constantly bumpin', thanks to impeccable drinks that would cost $4 more in the nearby North Loop. Of course, killer cocktails aren't made with crappy hooch, and Oskey's transition from shaker to still has been a success. Besides a refreshingly versatile gin and an oak-rested aquavit that's among the best spirits currently coming out of Minnesota, Oskey's inner bartender needed myriad liqueurs (including Tattersall's slightly pucker-y Cherry Heering alternative) to crank out proper cocktails. Ambitious amari forays have been surprising early successes; they've yielded a tamer, more medicinal fernet than the eucalyptus bomb of Branca. Haters could knock them for using a sourced bourbon (a fact they don't hide). But that's a whole lot less sinful than selling immature sawdust swill for $50 a bottle.

Readers' Choice: Tattersall Distilling

BEST MARTINI

Scena Tavern

2943 GIRARD AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-200-8641

www.scenatavern.com

The talented bar staff at the stylish Scena Tavern are creating some of the most intricate cocktails in town. You know something's up when the bar tools include repurposed perfume atomizers for carefully misting an effervescent whiff of bitters over a drink. But the bar also shines on pared-down classic drinks, in which stellar ingredients and an experienced hand create something better than the sum of its parts. That magic touch is evident in the Not a Martini After All, which consists of Modest vodka and a dirty cornichon olive. The name refers to the fact that there's no vermouth in this baby, just good vodka and a whisper of umami from the garnish. The drink is served with a gossamer-thin layer of ice that floats on top and keeps the liquid chilled. The dirty part comes from the garnish, a cornichon stuffed into an olive, which looks like it's very happy to see you. It's a grown-up's drink in more ways than one.

BEST BREWERY

Steel Toe Brewing

4848 W. 35TH ST.
ST. LOUIS PARK
952-955-9965

www.steeltoebrewing.com

For years this St. Louis Park brewery was slapped with the underrated tag, until it was no longer true. Steel Toe still doesn't have the boot print many of its peers do, but it's widely hailed as top of its class. Brewer and founder Jason Schoneman has stuck to his small-by-design mantra, though not as a rarifying, price-jacking marketing schtick. In the land of 10,000 IPAs, Steel Toe's citrus-bursting Size 7 is arguably the best and goes for workingman prices at $13 a growler. Rather than churn out subpar brews for new product's sake, Schoneman ensures that everything in his lineup hits the mark, including the Great American Beer Festival-winning Wee Heavy and session IPA Size 4.

BEST BEER TREND

Crowlers

It turns out there is such a thing as too much beer. Last night's growler will go flat; you'll pour half of it down the drain, then your empty brown jug will sit along

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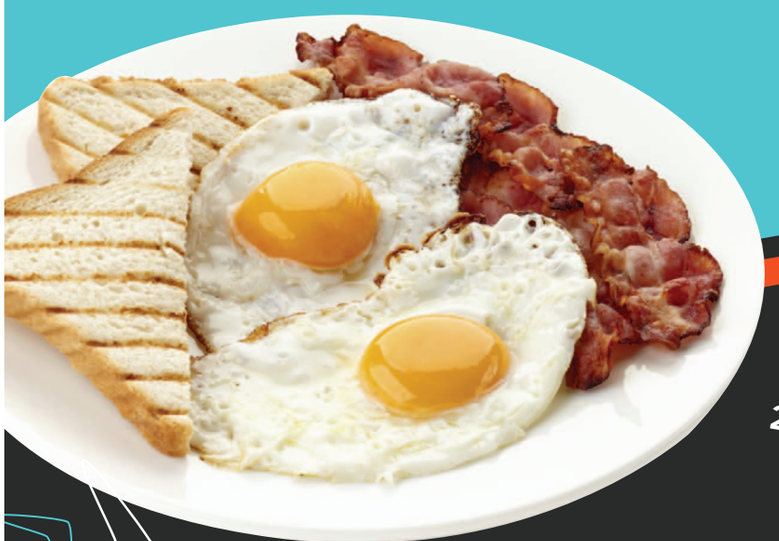

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with the rest of your Northeast collection on a shelf full of dusty, musty containers in the basement. Enter the Crowler, a 750-ml can that's appearing in taprooms across the state. At roughly two pints, it's half the size of a growler and the perfect amount of beer. Also, it doesn't require cleaning or a deposit, it's conveniently portable, and the oversized silver cans feel awesome in hand. It's plenty big, but also practical.

BEST NEW BAR

Dark Horse Bar and Eatery

250 E. SEVENTH ST.
ST. PAUL
651-313-7960

www.darkhorsebarandeatery.com

Dark Horse is big, welcoming, and bright, and whatever its name might suggest, its success is not wholly unexpected. This Lowertown newbie is the sister restaurant to the most excellent Muddy Waters across the river. Like its sibling, Dark Horse aims to accommodate almost everyone, with a sizeable beer menu, but also one of the most comprehensive whiskey selections in town. And it's open almost all the time, 11 a.m to 2 a.m., with a menu sprawling enough to suit any craving at any time of day. Baba ghanouj, Chinese steamed buns, salt and pepper wings, and Turkish fig balls — that's just the appetizer list. Most important are the oh-so-pro barmen who run things like the bosses they are. They'll treat you to a twice-a-day happy hour, where cans of beer of beer go for $2.75, vino is but $3, and $5 tacos provide the base.

BEST LOCAL BEER

Dangerous Man Peanut Butter Porter

1300 NE SECOND ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-236-4087

www.dangerousmanbrewing.com

Porters lend themselves to a variety of complementary flavors, like chocolate, chili, and coffee. Evoking these flavors is far from a worn-out gimmick; for Northeast hyper-locals Dangerous Man, the profile of a dark beer is more of a challenge than a comfort zone. They've imbued stouts with chocolate milk and coconut milk in the past, but their Peanut Butter Porter is the toast of the newly expanded microbrewer. The porter's roasty, toast-like body meshes cleanly with the peanut butter, bolstering a hint of salt without the oiliness of other PB-infused beers. Peanut Butter Porter is quickly becoming a flagship for the three-year-old Dangerous Man. More than that, it's now a veritable destination beer for Minnesota.

Readers' Choice: Surly Furious

BEST TAPROOM

Surly Brewing Co.

520 MALCOLM AVE. SE
MINNEAPOLIS
763-999-4040

www.surlybrewing.com

Surly's always-packed beer hall is in a class of its own. No other "taproom" in town can boast of a sprawling beer garden and two restaurants led by raved-about in-house chef Jorge Guzman. But take away that magnificent charcuterie board and all the frills $34 million can buy, and Surly's brew palace is still the best place in town for an on-site pint. Why? The beer, duh. Belly up on any given day and find around 20 unique tap handles (a loaded roster for a Minnesota taproom) pouring limited and seasonal beers. Try them all (though maybe not in one sitting), from hop fiend's dream Abrasive to a rebrew of Surly's long-retired first anniversary beer, One.

Readers' Choice: Surly Brewing Co.

BEST SUBURBAN TAPROOM

HammerHeart Brewing Company

7785 LAKE DR.
LINO LAKES
651-348-2654

www.hammerheartbrewing.com

There's a Norwegian flag outside the door, pine trees across the road, and the doorway leads into a log cabin-type building just off Anoka County 23. Inside, the decor is Northwoods Wisconsin, but with something else that can't quite be quantified. It's the skulls on the wall, the metal music pouring over the sound system, the sense that not only is HammerHeart removed from the city, but almost from civilization itself. It's rustic, but cozy. The big Norwegian-inspired beers out of HammerHeart are as unique as they come in Minnesota, either with barrel-aged booziness, a dense smoke flavor, or the juniper-jumping tastes of the Norse. HammerHeart is doing its own thing in a crowded scene, playing by its own rules instead of shining a spotlight on a stainless steel tank and blasting some ironic Journey over the PA.

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612-827-5811

www.shop.southlyndale.com

Since undergoing a serious expansion a few years back, South Lyndale Liquors has become a bona fide destination store. Just ask the parking lot attendant directing the constant traffic stream. Beyond the booze emporium's formidable wine stash and above-average beer selection, it's the south Minneapolis store's liquor setup that boosts it above the rest. Chances are South Lyndale carries that random bottle of mole bitters you've been hunting for, and the latest local distillery releases. But its mammoth sample wall is the real draw. Curious about that weird new gin bottle or intriguing whiskey that's an expensive gamble? Staff are happy to pour samples from the scores of bottles lining the try-before-you-buy rack. Don't get burned by bad booze ever again.

BEST BEER SELECTION IN A BAR

Republic

221 CEDAR AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-338-6146

www.republicmn.com

A bar doesn't need more than 20, maybe 25 taps to please all palates. Anything more is unnecessary bloat. But this is America, land of more choices than we can humanly process. Republic boasts an obscene 100 or so draft beers and ciders, and, refreshingly, doesn't pander too heavily to hop fiends. Co-owner Matty O'Reilly is a steward of Minnesota beer, and while the Seven Corners bar draws heavily from the local well, it doesn't do so for novelty's sake (only the good stuff here). When out-of-town beer fans visit and want to sample the local landscape, skip the taproom circuit and bring them here.

BEST NEW LAW

The Bloody Mary Bill

The Minnesota Legislature hardly gets anything right these days, and when it does, it comes years too late. That's going to be the case with Sunday liquor sales, which have been "right around the corner" for years now, despite being overwhelmingly popular with the public. Chinks in the armor have finally started to appear. Last year saw the biggest in the form of a handout to the busting-at-the-seams local brewing and distilling industries. Any Minnesota-based small brewing operation is now free to sell growlers on the Lord's Day, and distilleries can send customers home with enough to fill up the better part of a flask. These new rules were part of what was called the "Bloody Mary Bill," so nicknamed because it also allowed restaurants to start serving alcohol at 8 a.m. for their early brunch crowd, instead of the previous 10 a.m. Because, dammit, we're grown-ups, and if we want Sunday morning to feel more like Saturday night, that is our right as Americans. God forgive us.

BEST SCANDAL

Maple Tavern's Spotted Cow smugglers

If the person next to you is drinking Spotted Cow, one of three things is true: You are in Wisconsin; that person has recently returned from Wisconsin; or someone has broken the law. The last turned out to be the case when Maple Tavern in Maple Grove tried selling some of New Glarus' flagship beer they'd sneaked across Minnesota's eastern border. The bar owner and manager were nabbed by federal agents for possession of three kegs, and proof they'd already sold 10 others of the beloved cream ale, which, by law, can only be sold in Wisconsin. The bar temporarily lost its liquor license, and the smugglers were charged with a felony. Harsh justice for guys who were just trying to give unreformed Wisconsinites their fix.

BEST ITALIAN

Italian Eatery (i.e.)

4724 CEDAR AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-223-8504

www.italianeatery.com

When we crave Italian, we crave certain ingredients in particular: noodles, red sauce, roasted and braised meats, cheese. Italian Eatery, above all others, understands these imperatives. The cooking here gets out of its own way, a humble recognition that Italian probably doesn't need a lot of chefly flourish. Instead of flourishes, Italian Eatery focuses on mastering the essentials. Their restrained but skillful hand with pasta, gnocchi, tiramisu, and mussels tells the tale of humility. Service is comparable to the cooking — equal parts knowledge, confidence, and affability. This

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Readers' Choice: Cossetta Alimentari

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Birdie

3753 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-248-8111

www.nighthawksmpls.com/birdie

The fine dining of yore is all but outmoded around here. Three of our fanciest establishments fell in rapid succession this year: La Belle Vie, then Vincent, then Brasserie Zentral. There just aren't diners enough to fill all those ornate rooms. Which is why Landon Schoenefeld, long one of our town's most clever chefs, took a different approach with Birdie. His small south Minneapolis nook only expects to fill 12 seats nightly. In exchange for the neat and tight price of a one hundred dollar bill, diners are given a ticket to the show: 10 to 14 dishes comprising some of the finest cooking in town right now. A smoked carrot dumpling makes a play on barbecue. A single kale chip daubed with beef fat is meaty as anything. Baby potatoes are everything potatoes can be, in every iteration, on one small plate. And you're never quite sure what you're going to get, as the menu constantly evolves. This is the new face of fine dining, and it's all very surprising.

BEST SOUL FOOD

Breaking Bread Cafe

1210 W. BROADWAY AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-529-9346

www.breakingbreadfoods.com

Soul food gets a bum rap for being unhealthy. This fortifying cuisine was born of a need to make sturdy, nutrient-rich collard greens palatable; to put the summer's crop to good use; to use every bit of the beast — not just the tender ribs, but the feet, the ears, the tail. Soul food was farm to table before hipster gastronomists could even hold a spatula. And at Breaking Bread Cafe, chef LaChelle Cunningham knows that this is good food, healthy food, even with the fat and a little salt and sugar. Minimally processed, whole-ingredient, from-scratch cooking provides a welcome respite from north Minneapolis' fast-food stronghold. Dry-rub roasted chicken wings are perfectly seasoned and tender; jerk shrimp is a spicy kick in the pants. Mac and cheese makes for a delectable calorie splurge, but you can also fill your meat-and-two lunch plate with vegetarian collards, curried cabbage, or black beans and rice. Forget what you think you know about soul food. Let Breaking Bread welcome you in for a lunch that's affordable, fulfilling, and delicious.

BEST TACOS

Taco Libre

1221 S. ROBERT ST.
WEST ST. PAUL
651-444-8820

www.tacolibreusa.com

St. Paul's West Side is ground zero for Mexican and Mexican-American cuisine. The institutions there are beloved enough to provoke diners to fisticuffs over which of their favorites is best. Now we're heading just south to Taco Libre in West St. Paul, for the next evolution of the taco. Taking inspiration from Mexico City (its owners hail from that great food metropolis), the menu reflects the innovative resourcefulness of street meat tacos. Go to any city in Mexico, and your best taco is going to be the one that you get from the cart outside of the bus station. At Taco Libre, they've made that taco-cart taco the muse of their restaurant, without stripping it of any of its soul. Profound and tender tripe, decadent whole filets of asada, papas con chorizo frizzled until caramelized and crisp at the

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Readers' Choice: Rusty Taco

BEST MEXICAN

Andale Taqueria

7700 NICOLLET AVE. S.
RICHFIELD
612-259-8868

www.andaletaqueriaymercado.com

Guy Fieri kinda blew up Andale last year when he revealed it as the spot where his Twin Cities-based crew likes to grub down before flights outta MSP. The result was massive lines at the modest Richfield taqueria/mercado combo. On the bright side of all the commotion is that Andale finally got the traffic it's deserved since opening in 2011. The options come in heaps — from taco shop standbys like al pastor and carnitas to Tijuana delicacies like suadero and cecina — making Andale's menu one of the most formidable in Minnesota. Like other authentic taquerias, the counter service makes it easy to grab a quick bite. Unlike other authentic taquerias, there's no wrong way to turn.

Readers' Choice: Maya Cuisine

BEST CHINESE

Rainbow Chinese

2739 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-870-7084

www.rainbowrestaurant.com

There are few restaurants that qualify as culinary royalty the way Rainbow Chinese does. But though Tammy Wong owns a restaurant that has stood a three-decade test of time, she is still not one to rest on her laurels. Lately, she's been tightening up the menu. While old favorites remain, like kungpao beef with pea pods and bell peppers or general Tso's chicken, new vigor infuses the menu, as in the funky and spicy shrimp papaya salad, turnip cakes pan fried with eggs, and deep fried bao. With these, you'll eat the way Wong and her family do. And when dining here, you're always made to feel part of the family.

Readers' Choice: Rainbow Chinese

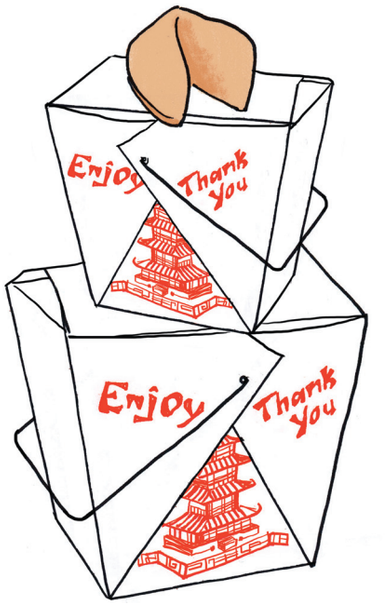
BEST VIETNAMESE

Ngon Vietnamese Bistro

799 UNIVERSITY AVE. W.
ST. PAUL
651-222-3301

www.ngonbistro.com

There are dozens of Vietnamese hole-in-the-wall joints in town that are long on flavor but short on ambiance. Ngon Vietnamese Bistro in St. Paul does things a bit differently. The stylish restaurant is bright and airy. Most of what's offered is prepared with local, organic ingredients, including one of the best bowls of pho in the Twin Cities. The broth is made with beef bones from the grass-fed cows of Thousand Hills Cattle Co., simmered for a day and a half to yield an intense yet nuanced flavor that wins the pho fight hands down. Among the vermicelli salads and dumplings are menu items that reflect the French influence on Vietnamese cooking. Try a Croque Madame with pho-spiced Mornay sauce



or a dinner special with a European bent. Wash it down with a craft cocktail — the drinks are on par with some of the best bar programs in town. Maybe your bill is

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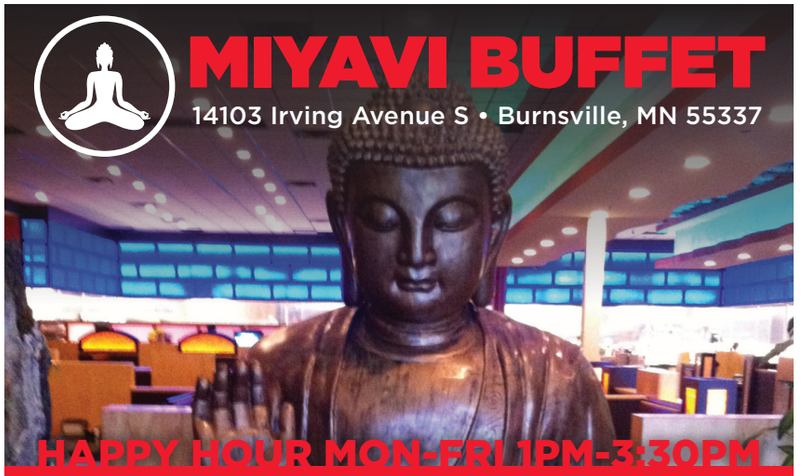

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a little higher than at your neighborhood joint, but you won't be sorry you splurged.

Readers' Choice: Quang Restaurant

BEST KOREAN

The Rabbit Hole

920 E. LAKE ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-236-4526

www.eatdrinkrabbit.com

The food at the Rabbit Hole, in Midtown Global Market, is a tongue-tingling adventure served up in funky, eclectic surroundings. There are tables sawed in half and mounted to the wall, arches formed of books that seemingly hold themselves in place, and a warren-like layout in the dining room, making every booth seem secluded and private. There's also a hopping bar with inventive cocktails that hold their own in our current craft cocktail obsession. But don't take things too seriously. The menu is billed as Korean by way of Los Angeles and highlights bold flavors, a fair amount of spice, and lots of creativity. Diners can play it safe with the buttermilk chicken, or get a little crazy with the Yuki vs. Winter, a spicy hot brisket stew. Even the house hamburger has a Korean flair to it, combining kimchi aioli with bacon, onions, and two kinds of cheese.

BEST SUSHI

Sushi Fix

862 LAKE ST. E.
WAYZATA
952-473-1364

www.sushifix.net

Few people in any industry take their vocation to the dramatic heights seen at Sushi Fix. No fan of banality, the team here seems to ask, "How can a thing become bigger, badder, more sensational? How can it be taller, wilder, more colorful, and awe-inspiring?" It goes without saying that the seafood is top quality. But from there, Sushi Fix puts irreverence and imagination into the serious business of raw fish. Tender rings of squid are re-plated to the creature's original shape, like a fishy, tubular puzzle. Salmon belly, fat and alluring as bacon, is presented like the petals of a flower. Slabs of salmon

ride piggyback to slabs of yellowtail for sashimi-on-sashimi action. Fresh wasabi gets grated into a silken pile instead of the powdery stuff you're accustomed to. And when you're tired of all that, swap out the fish for Wagyu nigiri, almost raw strips of the fabled Japanese beef, precious as the finest tuna. All of this is before you've broken into what is probably the largest Japanese whiskey collection in the state. The Japanese are believed by some to do scotch even better than the Scots. Whether or not you believe such things, welcome to an excellent place to test the theory.

Readers' Choice: Masu Sushi & Robata

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BEST RAMEN

Ramen Kazama

3400 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS

www.ramenkazama.com

Japanese-born Matthew Kazama had to suffer through years of living here without a proper ramen house. He worked as a sushi chef at Fuji Ya, where he put on a weekly ramen night to great fanfare. But he knew great ramen could not be relegated to Tuesdays or Thursdays alone. So he opened Ramen Kazama in south Minneapolis. Kazama's ramen is the ultimate populist food, a deeply rich bowl of broth with quality noodles for $12 or less. The broths are coddled slow and low to extract every benefit from the bones, fat, marrow, calcium, minerals, and proteins, until the end result is opaque, not clear. Noodles are brought in from Myojo, a gold-standard Japanese brand. From there, the bowls receive great fleshy slabs of pork, eggs like bright glimmering eyes, wood ear mushrooms that call the forest to mind. In this tiny, bustling shop, it's always ramen night.

BEST INDIAN

Gandhi Mahal

3009 27TH AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-729-5222

www.gandhimahal.com

It is impossible not to love a restaurant whose motto is "dedicated to bringing peace by pleasing the palate." While the bringing peace part is an ongoing process, pleasing the palate happens every day. The sensory experience starts the minute you enter the compact space and are enveloped in the enticing aroma of warm spices and the jangly notes of Indian music. Complimentary pappadams arrive at your table with a trio of sauces from mild to fiery. Whet your appetite for the authentic northern Indian and Bangladeshi specialties featured on the menu, but know that the most unique thing about Gandhi Mahal is something you can't see: There's a closed-loop aquaponic system in the basement where they raise tilapia and many of the herbs used in the restaurant.

BEST GREEK

Gardens of Salonica

19 FIFTH ST. NE
MINNEAPOLIS
612-378-0611

www.gardensofsalonica.com

From the burbling fountain that chases away the mid-week blahs to the well-worn bar, Gardens of Salonica has the homey, always-been-here feeling that welcomes regulars and new customers alike. Owners Anna and Lazaros Christoforides have served traditional and modern Greek food in this space for 25 years, with a commitment to using local, all-natural, and organic ingredients whenever possible. Where else in the metro will you find a restaurant that makes its own gyros, in this case, using pork shoulder from Fox Farms in Browerville? You'll find none of that pre-formed, factory-produced stuff here. Check out crowd favorites like pastitsio, that hot dish-like casserole of pasta, ground beef, and bechemel, and the dramatic flaming saganaki cheese as well as more refined dishes like psito, roast leg of lamb served with oven-roasted lemon potatoes. It's the next best thing to a trip to the Mediterranean.

BEST ETHIOPIAN

Shega Foods

2111 E. FRANKLIN AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-341-4373

This little Seward market could be a runner-up for "Best Kept Secret." Shega Foods is ground zero for injera bread, baked on site and served in bags with steamy condensation beads inside. This alone is worth the trip. But we love the literal hole-in-the-wall kitchen, where a takeout clamshell of beef tibs, yellow curry cabbage, kifto (heavily spiced ground beef), lamb or beef wat, or whatever else they're cooking that day goes for about $12. The bag is hefty, it's easily shareable for two, and don't forget to ask for a screamingly spicy serving of chopped chiles on the side. Best of all, Shega is also a smart little grocery, with inexpensive ghee, lentils, spices, and a small selection of produce and meats for when you try your hand at cooking African delights at home.

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BEST INTERNATIONAL GROCERY

United Noodles

2015 E. 24TH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-721-6677

www.unitednoodles.com

The Twin Cities doesn't have a Chinatown, Koreatown, or Japantown like our compatriots in Chicago, San Francisco, and New York. But we do have United Noodles. Think of it as your United Nations of culinary ingredients. Tucked away in the Seward neighborhood, this 15,000-square-foot emporium has a mind-boggling frozen food section, a fish counter, a full-service butcher, and an extensive produce section. It's easy to spend hours wandering the aisles of colorful snack foods (whether you can decipher the packages or not) and ogling all the animal bits that you won't see on display at Cub. You'll find products from China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, and Hawaii. There's a small housewares section where you can buy everything from back scratchers to rice cookers. Be sure to take advantage of the inexpensive and delicious ramen at the in-store cafeteria, Unideli.

BEST PLACE TO BUY LOCAL FOODS

Golden Fig Fine Foods

790 GRAND AVE.
ST. PAUL
651-602-0144

www.goldenfig.com

A few fun facts about Laurie McCann Crowell, owner of Golden Fig: She worked with both Ina Garten and Martha Stewart; she's been making her infused vinegars for 20 years; President Obama dropped by to shop when he was in town during the summer of 2014. How many people can say they've made change for the leader of the free world? It was her store's focus on locally made products that caught the president's attention, and that's what draws loyal customers to the store. Crowell, who has her own line of spices, flavored sugars, and salts, and those vinegars, also stocks the store with her favorite local and artisanal products. That includes goodies like handmade chocolates from Minneapolis' Mademoiselle Miel, jams from Heath Glen Farms in Forest Lake, and a selection of local cheeses. There's even an entire artisanal cocktail section. Try indulgences like bourbon cherries from the founder of 11 Wells Distillery in St. Paul and Crowell's own line of mixers in intriguing flavors like tart cherry cardamom cooler.

BEST VEGETARIAN

Triple Rock Social Club

629 CEDAR AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-333-7399

www.triplerocksocialclub.com

A venue known for its punk and indie rock shows isn't the first place that leaps to mind for vegetarians looking for a place to chow down. But believe it: Triple Rock Social Club has some of the best vegetarian — and vegan — options around. And these aren't just a few half-hearted nods to meat-free eaters, but a whole roster of choices that even non-vegetarians will find appealing. It may be bar food, but it's thoughtful bar food. The vegetarian chicken wings are so convincing, it feels like cheating. The grilled vegetable tacos are livened up by a house-made salsa. And you get entertainment with your meal. Sure, there's the music, but also the menu copy. It's the wittiest thing you'll read all month.

BEST GLUTEN-FREE MENU

French Meadow

2610 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-870-7855
1662 GRAND AVE.
ST. PAUL
651-789-8870

www.frenchmeadowcafe.com

People who eschew gluten are the aughts equivalent of the '80s yuppies: roundly ridiculed and the butt of many jokes. Lest we forget, Celiac disease, which requires a strict gluten-free diet, affects an estimated

1 percent of the U.S. population and is no laughing matter. Whether your gluten issue is a medical condition or personal preference, it can be hard to dine out. Doing so requires the asking of many questions, the ignoring of many side-eyes, and the cobbling together of a meal from "safe" items. French Meadow is a haven for many dietary restrictions: vegan, vegetarian, paleo — and gluten-free. The restaurant offers extensive gluten-free options at all meals, like the crab cake Benedict with organic eggs and sautéed organic spinach for brunch. There's even a gluten-free mac and cheese. The menu items are labeled, and the servers are well-informed and can help you choose wisely.

BEST NATURAL FOODS GROCERY

Wedge Community Co-op

2105 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-3993

www.wedge.coop

Anyone who has tried to navigate the parking lot at the Wedge on a Saturday afternoon has experienced the living definition of clusterfuck. But the reason the parking lot is such a disaster is because people love this neighborhood landmark, as its continuing growth attests. The co-op was founded in 1974 and moved to its current location in 1979; it expanded twice in the '90s and is currently undergoing major renovations. It's easy to take the co-op's influence for granted. Organic is mainstream now, and all major grocery stores have a bulk section. But it wasn't always that way, and the Wedge was a pioneer in providing shoppers with local, sustainable, fair-trade products. The building that houses the Wedge has undergone many changes, but the founding principles of the co-op have not.

BEST FARMERS MARKET

St. Paul Farmers' Market

290 E. FIFTH ST.
ST. PAUL
651-227-8101

www.stpaulfarmersmarket.com

The Twin Cities metro is home to more than 50 farmers markets, with more popping up every summer. From Woodbury to Wayzata and Burnsville to Brooklyn Park, you could spend your week frequenting a different market each day. We can thank the granddaddy of them all for setting the standard. The St. Paul Farmers' Market was founded in 1853. It moved to its current home in the heart of Lowertown in 1982, and now is on the Green Line, surrounded by restaurants, coffee shops, and the new Saints stadium, but still has a quaint small-town charm. The market is big enough to offer plenty of variety, and small enough that you can stop by every stall to peruse the wares. The market has strict guidelines on selling only locally grown and produced products, so there are no bananas like you'll find at markets that allow resale. You will, however, find baked goods, jams, spice blends, eggs, meat, bedding plants, and dog treats in addition to an abundance of produce. Expand your vegetable repertoire by trying some of the lesser-known options sold by the many Hmong farmers.

BEST URBAN FARM

Urban Organics

700 MINNEHAHA AVE. E.
ST. PAUL

www.urbanorganics.com

What do you do with a hulking former brewery that sat empty and dilapidated for almost two decades? If you're the team behind Urban Organics, you turn the old Hamm's building on St. Paul's east side into a home for your aquaponics "farm." And there you grow healthy food in the city, year-round despite a climate with one of the shortest growing seasons in the country. Aquaponics is a self-sustaining symbiotic system in which plants and fish co-exist. Fish waste fertilizes the plants, and the plants in turn filter the water the fish live in. The system can produce certified organic vegetables using less than 2 percent of the water used by traditional farming methods. The decision to locate the business in the former brewery is also a symbiotic one: The site has access to the naturally occurring wells that were used to produce beer. They now fuel the farm. The business supplies produce to local supermarkets and co-ops, while the fish go to area restaurants. Urban Organics is currently working on its second facility, in St. Paul's former Schmidt Brewery.

BEST FRIES

Bradstreet Neighborhood Craftshouse

1930 HENNEPIN AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-1200

www.bradstreetcraftshouse.com

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fries at Bradstreet Craftshouse just might bring all the factions together and settle the debate once and for all. The potatoes are cut on the thinner side, but not shoe-string skinny. They are fried to golden perfection and tossed with the Japanese seasoning togarashi — a blend of chiles, orange peel, ginger, sesame seed, and seaweed. It packs an umami punch and a pleasant spiciness, amped up with a side of sriracha mayo. This addictive combination will seriously test your sharing skills.

Readers' Choice: Five Guys Burgers and Fries

BEST FRIES (ALTERNATIVE)

SW Craft Bar

111 KELLOGG BLVD. E.
ST. PAUL
651-224-2019

www.swcraftbar.com

The eggplant needs our help. They look great sitting out, but what's inside doesn't have much texture or flavor. The upside: Eggplant is a chameleon ingredient, ready to absorb or become one with whatever it's thrown into. At SW Craft in downtown St. Paul, the eggplant fries are sliced thin and short, and tossed in panko bread crumbs. Then they're fried to a crisp that'll remind you of a lightly seasoned Asian cracker. Save the pillowy yucca fries for the days when your teeth are falling out. Bite into these crunchy fries now. One suggestion: These can come vegan, with a perfectly passable vegan aioli — its own feat — but shop around for more exciting dipping sauces with your server's assistance. Help the eggplant.

BEST BURGER (CLASSIC)

Lyon's Pub

16 S. SIXTH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-333-6612

www.lyonspub.com

A Lyon's burger is a burger taken in its natural habitat. A baseball game drones on a corner screen. Pro barmen simultaneously gab, draw beer, and deliver burgers onto the long oak bar. This classic American pub is light on frills and rich with the aroma of beef. This is a burger for sticklers, loaded with toppings that wouldn't embarrass your dad. The patty is delivered medium rare, unless you specify, and why would you? It's not too big, not too small, and served on a squishy bun, off a grill as seasoned as those barmen. You may want to order two, but be strategic; the hand-cut fries rival the perfection of the beef.

Readers' Choice: Matt's Bar

BEST BURGER (CHEFFED-UP)

The Burger 2.0 at Il Foro

40 S. SEVENTH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-238-2300

www.il-foro.com

Before all the double-patty smash burgers in town, there was the Parlour burger. Two quality, house-ground patties, smashed on the flat-top to medium perfection, and besieged with enough melted American cheese to rival the starring role of the meat. It's a burger that spawned a hundred copycats and marked its creator, chef Joe Rolle, as a kind of burger mastermind. So when Rolle shifted over to take the reins at Il Foro, he set out to build a better burger — the Burger 2.0. He did it. Sirloin, brisket, and short rib come together in a holy trinity of OMFG. The American cheese goes on with an ice cream scoop. A little stack of pickles rides sidecar, daring you to decide whether they could possibly make the burger any better. Maybe, but nothing else in the world could.

BEST HOT DOG

Yakisoba Dog, Kyatchi

3758 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-236-4429

www.kyatchi.com

Kyatchi's menu of sustainable sushi and hot dogs seems like a head-scratcher. But the Japanese love hot dogs, and so the combo

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www.elementpizza.com

makes perfect sense. The mashups continue from there. The Yakisoba Dog is a locally made Limousin beef hot dog resting beneath a tangle of stir-fried soba noodles and topped with onion, red ginger, and Japanese mayo. The noodles are the real star of this circus: Messy, slippery, umami-rich, they turn an ordinary hot dog into the object of beatific odes. Of course, the dog wouldn't be anything at all without Kyatchi's strict adherence to quality meat, an all-beef, snaps-when-you-bite craftsman product. It's as luxe as tube meat has any business being.

BEST VEGETARIAN HOT DOG

Nighthawks

3753 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-248-8111

www.nighthawksmpls.com

To the average carnivore, replacing a frank with a carrot sounds like heresy. But hear us out: With a meal like this, it's not about the base, but the fixins. The bun and "dog" simply serve as a conveyor for the kind of stuff (fancy mayo, liquid cheese, pickled onion) one doesn't usually chow down on without accompaniment. At Nighthawks, you can sub any selection from the hot dog menu for a carrot "dog." The Nighthawk is loaded with dill mayo, spicy cheese, fiery mustard, crunchy pickled veggies, and shoestring potatoes. The Omega Moo is a Greek sample platter, with feta, pepperoncini, olives, tomatoes, and pickled onion. The Minnesoter is a pescetarian picnic, loaded with potato salad, fermented cucumbers, salmon roe, and pickled herring. Never has a carrot sandwich been so satisfying.

BEST CHEAP EATS

Evergreen Chinese Restaurant

2424 NICOLLET AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-6801

www.evergreen-chinese.com

One look at the Evergreen menu and you will be convinced that some longstanding mistake has been made. "Waiter, please bring us the menu," you'll say. "This one is clearly from 1966." They will assure you it's real. This authentic Taiwanese/Chinese outlet on Eat Street is selling items for low (and oddly specific) prices: Two egg rolls for $3.20, say, or fish ball soup for $2.75. Get further into the menu, toward the rice and noodle entrees, and the prices look more familiar, but are still affordable. At $15, a "Happy Family" of shrimp, scallops, and chicken is as high as it goes. By that point, you can afford to splurge. Or just keep pecking your way through the cheap stuff until you're sated, with tastes of ginger, bamboo, and wine still on your tongue. You will emerge from this downstairs Eat Street gem feeling wise. Not rich, necessarily, but a little less poor than you might've been somewhere else.

FRIED CHICKEN

Revival

4257 NICOLLET AVE.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-345-4516

www.revivalmpls.com

In order to do certain things right, you have to be a specialist. Fried chicken is one of those things. When chef Thomas Boemer recalls tasting his first fried chicken as a kid in Lexington, North Carolina, he remembers its singular simplicity. Standing in the doorway of a home kitchen, he watched as his friend's mother slowly, methodically battered and fried the bird, piece by piece. It was simple, deliberate, special; a careful business. At Revival, they use this same care to prepare four different iterations: Southern-fried, gluten-free, Tennessee Hot, and Poultrygeist with ghost chiles. We advise you to be especially careful with that last one. Otherwise, throw caution to the wind and get elbow deep in some crispy, golden chicken. Revival demands nothing less.

Readers' Choice: Revival

BEST WINGS

Monte Carlo

219 THIRD AVE. N.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-333-5900

www.montecarlomn.com

John Rimarcik, the 77-year-old owner of the Monte Carlo, describes the inspiration for his Beijing-style wings thusly: He wanted a wing that could be picked up and eaten without dripping onto his shoes. He succeeded. Of course, these wings are more than just a tidy lunch. The Beijing-style 18-spice combination packs a wallop of cinnamon, celery salt, cumin, red-pepper flakes, chili powder, garlic, and more. The wings are always fresh, seasoned a day in advance, fried to order, and then tossed again in this signature mix. The result is a dozen extra crispy, extra big wings with a flavor profile that balances sweet, spicy, and savory. Home cooks should know, Rimarcik

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isn't secretive about his dry-rub creation. He invites people to call the restaurant for the recipe. He says all it takes to make his style of wings is skill, execution, and love.

Readers' Choice: Blue Door Pub

BEST PIZZA

Big River Pizza

280 E. FIFTH ST.
ST. PAUL
651-683-2186

www.bigriverpizza.com

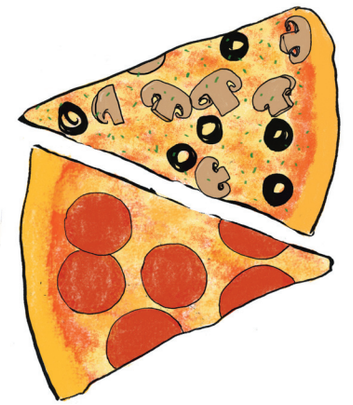
Big River Pizza began at area farmers markets as a roving pizza oven that beguiled shoppers. Now they're sitting pretty in a brick-and-mortar directly across from one of the best markets in town: the St. Paul Farmers' Market. How fitting for these makers of rustic, wood-fired pizzas with fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Get the Dr. Zeus, piled with plump artichokes, kalamata olives, feta, and spinach, and so laden with toppings it takes two hands to eat. Or try a spicy chile-oil based pie like the Chet, loaded with thick cuts of salami and lardo, and finished with a sprightly, lemony arugula. The toppings are a treat, but the crust is no slouch either, with a thin, crispy base, respectable char from the oven, and enough chew to keep it from being brittle. The 16-inch pie is more than enough for two hungry adults or several eager snackers. Wash it down with a Surly or a glass of sustainable wine and maybe a cup of Sweet Science ice cream for your dolce.

Readers' Choice: Pizza Lucé

BEST STATE FAIR FOOD

Sweet Martha's Cookie Jar

Sweet Martha, the former elementary school teacher who hit it big in the baking game, understood this ironclad truth: We want our chocolate chip cookies hot, fresh, and by the bucketful. We're talking four dozen perfectly browned discs of butter, sugar, and chocolate for a cool $16. Like sherpas crossing the Himalayas with pouches full of dried yak meat, each August hordes of Minnesotans bravely cross the expanse of the State Fair with their cookie buckets. What else would sustain us between the cheese curd stand and the Corn Roast? What else can we take home as a souvenir of our journey and continue to happily munch on for weeks to come? It just isn't the Minnesota State Fair until we've seen someone inhale 10 cookies in order to shut the lid on a Sweet Martha's cookie pail. And we wouldn't have it any other way.



BEST CHILI

The Lowry Cafe

2207 LOWRY AVE. N.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-677-2233

What differentiates one chili from another? For starters, the beef. Lowry Cafe's is locally sourced and grass-fed, and the quality shines through in the final product. There's more to a winning bowl of chili, of course, but the recipe is a trade secret. Chef Taya Kaufenberg won't say, but rumor has it that within the slow slimmer of ingredients exists some kind of brown-sugared love, we're guessing molasses or chocolate. Whatever it is, the secret ingredient elevates the chili at this north Minneapolis joint from standard to transcendent.

BEST STEAK

Sushi Fix

862 LAKE ST. E.
WAYZATA
952-473-1364

www.sushifix.net

If it's counterintuitive to order steak at a sushi restaurant, Sushi Fix doesn't care. When you've got real Japanese Wagyu beef, you serve it; when you see it on the menu, you order it. Here it's served two ways. The first preparation celebrates the simplicity of the laced-with-fat beef, sliced thin and flash-seared. A steak knife is optional — the meat's that tender. In its second iteration, the Wagyu is seared in bite-size pieces and served over peasant rice. Both highlight the versatility of Wagyu at its finest. This is not your normal steak joint with cavemen-sized slabs; the meat comes small and succulent. Kick it off with sake, and then find your way to beef bliss.

Readers' Choice: Manny's Steakhouse

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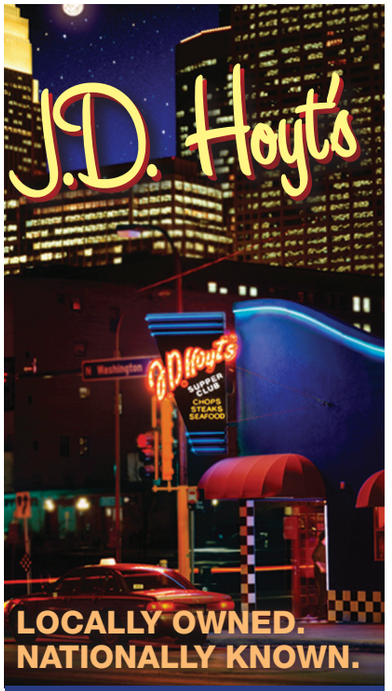

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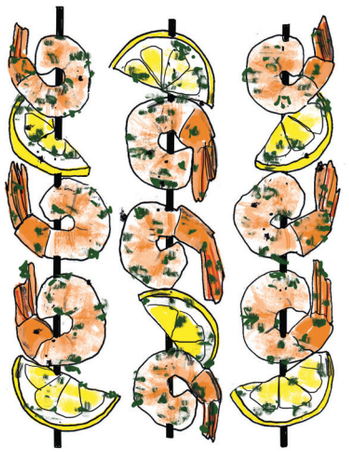

BEST SEAFOOD

4 Bells

1610 HARMON PL.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-904-1163
www.4bells.com

When saltwater cravings overwhelm you, you may as well go all out. There are fish specialists everywhere, but 4 Bells refuses to be constrained. Behold: dozens of critters arranged on piles of crushed ice, next to yellow wedges of sour lemon and pots of cocktail sauce. These are sculptural towers of shellfish, designed to put your company's expense account to the test. (Yes, surprise your out-of-town business guests with fruits de mer as fresh as those from any coast.) There's whole fried snapper, the likes of which are generally only available at the finest Thai places, and then only if you scour the city. And just for good measure, there's a caviar service. Among all of this decadence, you'll find oysters on the half shell, king crab legs with drawn butter, peel-and-eat shrimp, barely opaque ceviche, scallops seared to toasty precision, and something called tilefish, served with popcorn. You'd need an ocean to contain it all. Or at least an ambitious restaurant bursting at the seams with brine, bumping up against Loring pond, pretending not to be landlocked.

BEST ICE CREAM

Milkjam Creamery

2743 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-424-4668
www.milkjamcreamery.com

The hottest ice cream shop in the metro, hell, maybe in the country, opened in the sub-zero temps of January. Milkjam is the latest endeavor from chef Sameh Wadi, of Saffron and popular fast casual spot World Street Kitchen, and located next door to the latter in Uptown. A rotating menu of 16 inventive flavors with witty names like Cereal Killers (orange coriander milk with candied fruity pebbles) and Indian Elvis (curry peanut butter banana) are served in homemade cones, in sundaes, or as Jam Buns, an over-the-top ice cream sandwich made with Glam Doll doughnuts. Looking for a buzz? There are also adult ice cream floats made with sparkling wine or beer. Lactose intolerant? So is Wadi, so you can wipe away those tears — many of the selections are vegan.

Readers' Choice: Izzy's

BEST DESSERT

Passionfruit Hibiscus Ice Cream, Milkjam

2743 LYNDALE AVE. S.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-424-4668
www.milkjamcreamery.com

Floral, sour, tropical, sweet — passionfruit meeting hibiscus makes for a heady blend of tropical flavors unlike anything you've had in the Twin Cities. In the hands of Milkjam, they're paired with coconut milk instead of dairy for yet more islander essence. This cunning maneuver does double duty: Chef Sameh Wadi is lactose intolerant, so coconut milk makes it safe for him to eat. It also means many of his ice creams are vegan. If that's an idea that makes you squirm, know this: Almond and coconut milks are like the luge of flavor delivery systems. Where dairy can coat the tongue, these get out of the way for intense flavors like darkest cocoa, Champagne, and mulled cider.

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www.kul-chocolate.com

Any bean-to-bar chocolate maker almost automatically earns the moniker of "best" thanks to dedication alone. We have very few of those in the state, but K'ul (pronounced "cool," Mayan for "chocolate") is one of them. And they aren't just shilling sugar, either; these chocolates are energy bars. After researching low-glycemic bar alternatives for bike racing, founder Peter Kelsey, former owner of the New French Bakery, landed on chocolate. Additions like maca, guarana, cranberries, and pumpkin seeds up the nutritional quotient. It's absolutely delicious, it also just happens to be good for you. Nirvana, achieved. Pro tip: Get bars made to order, before your eyes, at their Seward neighborhood storefront.

BEST PEANUT BUTTER

Wedge Community Co-Op

2105 LYNDALE AVE. S.
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612-871-3993

www.wedge.coop

Even people trying to eat healthy can be deceived. Turns out Coca Cola's serving up your coconut water, and your veggie burgers come from Kraft Foods. Take the guessing out of it by getting the fresh-ground peanut butter from the Wedge. Know what's in it? Peanuts. You can tell, because it happens right in front of you. Grab a container, press the green button, and watch as the goobers inside the plastic machine are depleted. Your container fills with thick, rich, and creamy peanut butter you can believe in. Spread it on whole wheat toast, salt to taste, and throw on a dollop of honey or jam. With no preservatives, you might consider refrigerating, but only if you think it'll take more than a couple days to eat it all. It won't.

BEST NEW FOOD TREND

Ramen

It's taken far too long for this beloved delicacy to make its way to our town. A piping hot bowl of ramen, inexpensive yet scrupulously prepared, is practically a birthright in some cities. Finally, a handful of local chefs have taken up the cause, giving diners reason to wait in long, hungry lines. Those who have been doing it for years are perfecting it (Zen Box), and specialists are moving in, slow but steady (Ramen Kazama). Even chefs who specialize in other things are trying their hand at it when time permits. Keep an eye on Spoon and Stable's Twitter feed for 12-bowl-only runs. We've even heard that Tanpopo's formerly Monday-only ramen is now a nightly thing. But you gotta be in the know. And now you are.

BEST KICKSTARTER

Bones Pizza

NOT OPEN YET

www.bonesminneapolis.com

In December, Ryan Jordon's Kickstarter campaign for his fledgling business, Bones Pizza, got lots of exposure thanks to its witty writing and outlandish incentives. (For a $1 donation he would send you an email that said, "Really, Dude? $1?") Jordon spent time as a comedy writer in New York, but pizza is his passion, and his mission is to help disenfranchised young people gain job training and marketable skills. Combining the two is the dream he was hoping to bring to fruition with Bones. Unfortunately, he didn't reach his funding goal, so he is regrouping, working on raising money, and deciding how best to make his idea a reality. He still hopes to have some version of Bones Pizza up and running in 2016.

BEST KEPT SECRET

Afro Deli

1939 S. FIFTH ST.
MINNEAPOLIS
612-871-5555
5 W. SEVENTH PL.
ST. PAUL
651-888-2168

www.afrodeli.com

Though it's been open five years, Afro Deli is not yet a household name. Not a household name, despite burritos that cast Chipotle into the realm of banal with their heady African spices. Not a household name, despite a steak sandwich that will have you looking askance at a Philly, and handmade sambusas that are ready to take over as the dumpling for a new generation. Owner Abdirahman Kahin is a Somali-born entrepreneur so ingenious he recently joined President Barack Obama at the State of the Union Address. "For over five years, Afro Deli has introduced Minnesotans to delicious African and Mediterranean cuisine with an American twist, and its success is a testament to Abdirahman's entrepreneurship,"

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NORTHRUPKINGBUILDING.COM

said Sen. Al Franken. There's not much we can add to that, except to ask: Why haven't you been here yet?

BEST SUBURBAN EATS

Travail Kitchen and Amusements

4124 W. BROADWAY AVE.
ROBBINSDALE
763-535-1131

www.travailkitchen.com

Everyone knows the coolest culinary innovations happen in big cities, right? Wrong. Travail is a testament to how genius can thrive in small cities. In this unassuming building on Robbinsdale's main drag, kitchen tinkerers channel the curiosity of scientists and the flair of ringmasters, crafting dishes beyond your wildest imagination. There are atomizers and Pop Rocks; there is a lot of liquid nitrogen. A pork fat candle melts down to become a decadent sauce. Speck ham is served — and eaten — from meat hooks. A rotating selection of 14 to 20 microplates makes up the tasting menu, the best and only way to experience Travail. The emphasis here is on amusement, so they sell tickets to the show — $60 to $95, gratuity included. (You can also head to the attached Rookery for a chance to survey the microplates at your own pace and leisure, no tickets or reservations necessary.) Go forth and be amused, amazed, and fed in humble Robbinsdale.

Readers' Choice: Travail Kitchen and Amusements

BEST FOOD NEIGHBORHOOD

Lowertown

ST. PAUL

Home of the best new restaurant in St. Paul (Saint Dinette), the best farmers market (St. Paul Farmers' Market), the best pizza (Big River Pizza), and the best new bar (Dark Horse), Lowertown is forcing St. Paul detractors to take a second look. This former warehouse district along the Mississippi River has always had a cool industrial edge to it. But Lowertown's dining clout has gotten a tremendous boost of late. Within the last year, celebrated chef Lenny Russo opened Heartland Wine Bar to vend posh sandwiches and glasses of rosé for a refined meal before a St. Paul Saints game. The owners of the perennially popular Muddy Waters in Uptown Minneapolis opened their Dark Horse Bar and Eatery to serve one of the most eclectic menus in town. The guys behind Strip Club Meat and Fish opened Saint Dinette, purveyor of killer cocktails and bologna sandwiches. And Handsome Hog, a contemporary Southern restaurant, is now smoking, saucing, and dishing up authentic barbecue. Within a few blocks you can get some of the best sandwiches, burgers, pizza, produce, pork, bar food, and cocktails in the Twin Cities. Still think St. Paul is just the sleepy seat of government? Visit Lowertown and be pleasantly surprised by how wrong you are.

BEST FOOD TRUCK

Chef Shack

612-354-2575

www.twitter.com/@chefshack1

Downtown paper pushers and local brewery denizens know Chef Shack well. They know that the women behind this truck are to thank for their quick and easy lunch that's far superior to skyway fast-food options, or their nosh that soaks up more suds than a bag of chips. Lisa Carlson and Carrie Summer were pioneers in the food truck movement in the Twin Cities, paving the way for the bounty to come. The restaurant-trained chefs started at the Mill City Farmers Market selling, among other things, their signature Indian-spiced mini doughnuts. The pair now have two brick-and-mortar locations, one in Minneapolis and one in Wisconsin. But you'll still see the familiar red truck bopping around town, vending mini doughnuts to happily waiting fans.

Readers' Choice: Smack Shack

BEST OUTDOOR DINING

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651-666-9491

www.comodockside.com

Long one of our state treasures, Como Pavilion has spawned a million memorable moments. Untold numbers of people have frolicked beneath its grand pillars, the adjacent lake winking away like an approving blue eye. Now, finally, the eats and drinks have caught up to all this magical appeal, so that a million more moments can make their way into history. In addition to freewheeling Creole cooking, find a full bar (a full bar at the park!), tasting menus with wine pairings, beignets with powdered sugar at brunch, and a full weekday breakfast starting at 8 a.m. There are also a half-dozen iterations of the Bloody Mary, a grilled pimento cheese sandwich, a $375 bottle of Dom Perignon, surrey bikes, brass bands, and other surprising props for making moments.

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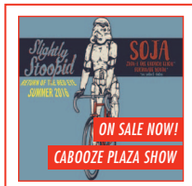

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A LIST

FRIDAY Saint Paul Art Crawl kicks off **P. 185** **SATURDAY** Tour noteworthy parking lots via bike **P. 189** **SUNDAY** Women's Theater Fest takes the stage **P. 195**

Form + Content's "Fierce Lament" explores the state of Mother Earth.

ANDREA CARLSON, *THE PORTAGE*

THURSDAY 4/21

COMEDY

AMY SCHUMER

TARGET CENTER

Like so many comics before her, Amy Schumer has parlayed her standup success into a range of media enterprises, including television (most notably, the Emmy Award-winning *Inside Amy Schumer*), feature films (including her first starring role in 2015's *Trainwreck*), and literature (her debut book, *The Girl with the Lower Back Tattoo*, is set for publication this August). Those worried that such a prolific range of projects portends the end of Schumer's standup career will be heartened to know that the comedian has no plans of abandoning the stage. As evidenced by last year's HBO special, *Amy Schumer: Live at the Apollo*, the comic has lost none of her signature irreverence and raunchy humor. Instead, as her profile has risen in the entertainment world, Schumer's sets have incorporated even more cringe-worthy personal accounts of the myriad absurdities of fame and its vacuous trappings. Introducing new material to the arena audience, Schumer will set out to prove that while the venues have gotten bigger, her provocative, sharp sense of humor is strong enough to elicit laughter all the way from the floor into the rafters. $51-$111. 8 p.m. 600 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-673-0900. **—BRAD RICHASON**

DANCE

LUIS GARAY

WALKER ART CENTER

Choreographer Luis Garay focuses on the body's morphology in *Maneries*, a virtuosic solo piece created for Florenica Vecino. The term "maneries" refers to a kind of fountain from which all possible forms emanate. As she moves through a catalog of gestures and poses, Vecino's compressed, sculpted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 183 ▸

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Luis Garay presents an athletic physicality.

PHOTO COURTESY THE ARTIST

CONTINUED FROM THURSDAY ▸

physicality suggests an athlete preparing for some Olympic contest or a ritual enactment. A kinesthetic transformation at once compact and discursive, this 70-minute work plays out to electronic music by DJ Mauro Ap. $18-$22. 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. 1750 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-375-7600. **Through Saturday** —LINDA SHAPIRO

COMEDY

CHRIS D'ELIA

VARSITY THEATER

If brutish dude humor is your jam, Chris D'Elia is your comedian. If jokes about fat people, cultural stereotypes, or bodily functions offend you, this show is not for you. In his act, the scraggly-haired 36-year-old (who has a propensity for laughing at his own jokes) covers running into exes in public, the alien nature of babies, his aversion to televised sports, and the dangers of replying to anonymous online haters. An in-demand actor, D'Elia co-starred on *Whitney* for two years, and currently appears as Danny Burton on *Undateable*. Impressions of the average female dater and analysis of excessive mating rituals (dinner, movie, and a museum) that men sometimes submit to are his strong suit. "Am I trying to get laid or is this a scavenger hunt? Dating is some crafty, evil-genius shit." Expect abundant obscenities and scant insight; D'Elia's aggressive, explicit style is the comedy equivalent of junk food. All ages. $34. 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday. **Through Friday** —ERICA RIVERA

BAR CRAWL

TASTE OF STADIUM VILLAGE

STADIUM VILLAGE

Fans of killer happy hour deals need look no further than this Thursday's Taste of Stadium Village, where patrons will find $1 food items at various businesses from 4 to 7 p.m. That includes mac 'n' cheese slices from Mesa Pizza, chicken fingers at Raising Cain's, chicken tacos at Bar Luchador, and chili cheese tater tots at Sally's Saloon. Beer specials will abound as well, with $2 Summits flowing from 4 p.m. to bar close. Some spots will be offering samples and other freebies as well, including Fireball shots from Playoffs Sports Lounge. How could that go wrong? Free. 900 Washington Ave. SE, Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

COMEDY

JULIAN MCCULLOUGH

RICK BRONSON'S HOUSE OF COMEDY

Julian McCullough is a frequent guest and fan favorite on fellow comic Doug Benson's very popular podcast *Doug Loves Movies*. With permission, he lifted the idea from Benson to create a music podcast called *Julian Loves Music*. "I've always wanted to be a musician," he says. "My dad is a musician, but I didn't get any of that talent, so it's always been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 185 ▸

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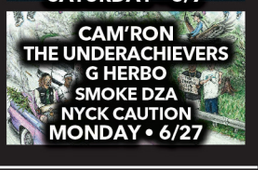
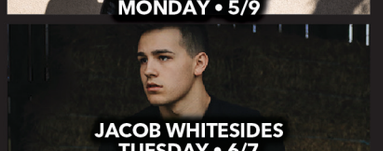


THE LOFT AT SKYWAY THEATRE

STUDIO B AT SKYWAY THEATRE



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RASHELLE BROWN, *VITALITY*

CONTINUED FROM THURSDAY ▸

frustrating for me. Like a lot of music snobs, I've tried to make up for not being able to do music by knowing as much as I can about it." McCullough's show is actually quite a bit different than Benson's. On *Doug Loves Movies*, the guests have a brief discussion about film, and then play the Leonard Maltin Game. On McCullough's show, the guests play a variety of music-based challenges of his invention. "There are about eight movies out at a time, and most of America has seen at least one of them," McCullough says. That means guests and audiences have common reference points for Benson's show. Music, however, is different. "Music is very personal. And who knows what people are listening to, because there's so much out there." 18+; 21+ later shows. $15-$22. 7:30 p.m. Thursday; 7:30 and 9:45 p.m. Friday; 7 and 9:30 p.m. Saturday; 7 p.m. Sunday. 408 E. Broadway, Mall of America, Bloomington; 952-858-8558. **Through Sunday** —P.F. WILSON

FRIDAY 4/22

ART/FESTIVAL

SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

The semi-annual Saint Paul Art Crawl serves as a reminder of just how integral the artistic community has been to the character of the city. Since 1991, the Saint Paul Art Collective has organized the event, which opens up copious studio spaces to visitors. Originally a Lowertown happening, the crawl has grown so popular that exhibition areas have cropped up in areas of downtown, East Side and West Side neighborhoods, and designated spots along University and Grand Avenues. To help visitors get a handle on the expansive layout, detailed maps can be found online at saintpaulartcrawl.org, along with a comprehensive catalog listing artists, mediums, and interactive activities. Reflecting the downside of Lowertown's revived popularity, two popular studio spaces, the JAX Building and 262 Studios, have recently been sold for commercial redevelopment, making this a particularly crucial time to show support to those artists who have lent such vitality to our capital city. Free. 6 to 10 p.m. Friday; noon to 8 p.m. Saturday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. **Through Sunday** —BRAD RICHASON

DANCE

YOUNG DANCE: UNCHARTED

THE LAB THEATER

Young Dance challenges an ensemble of eager, hard-working kids to explore their own moves and those of guest choreographers. This year's Uncharted concert includes choreography from local luminaries Pramila Vasudevan, Heidi Eckwall, Becky Heist, BodyCartography Project, Marcus Young, and Maggie Bergeron. The students' own dances are also part of the mix. Storyteller extraordinaire Kevin Kling will be the master of ceremonies at Friday's gala, and the matinee on Saturday is geared toward families and young children. $40-$120

CONTINUED ON PAGE 187 ▸

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James Sewell Ballet heralds the arrival of spring.

EMMA FREEMAN

CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ▸

Friday gala; $8-$15 Saturday. 7 p.m. Friday; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday. 700 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-333-7977.
Through Saturday —LINDA SHAPIRO

DANCE

JAMES SEWELL BALLET SPRING SEASON

THE COWLES CENTER FOR DANCE & THE PERFORMING ARTS

This weekend, the feisty James Sewell Ballet ushers in spring with robust choreography. Sewell incorporates hoverboards, colorguard flags, a few tubas, and giant, inflatable water balls into his new "Band It," a collaboration with Edina High School's band. Nashville Ballet's artistic director Paul Vasterling contributes "Seasons," an impressionistic take on Vivaldi's iconic *The Four Seasons*, which focuses on the affinities and disparities between men and women. Sewell's bright "Chopin Studies" rounds out the program, danced to live music by pianist Tadeusz Majewski. A special, shorter family program offered on Saturday, April 23 at 11 a.m. features excerpts from "Band It" and "Chopin Studies" with the Reif Dance Company from Grand Rapids Minnesota. $20-$36; $10 family program. 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; 11 a.m. Saturday, April 23; 2 p.m. Sunday, April 30. 528 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-206-3636.
Through May 1 —LINDA SHAPIRO

CONTINUED ON PAGE 189 ▸

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Joseph Horton's "A Hill in Natchez"
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MARK SCHOENING, *INFORMATION FEED #10*

Distracting and attracting work at Public Functionary

CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ▸

ART/GALLERY

FIERCE LAMENT

FORM + CONTENT GALLERY

Forty-six years ago, the first Earth Day was held in response to a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Curated by artist and activist Camille J. Gage, "Fierce Lament" takes a retrospective look at past celebrations, as well as the outcome of the recent climate conference in Paris. Featuring work by 18 artists and poets, the who's-who roster — which includes local luminaries such as Gregory Euclide, Andrea Carlson, Sean Connaughty, Heid E. Erdrich, and Alyssa Baguss — promises pieces in a variety of disciplines that will arrest, ignite, and engage. There will be a public reception from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, April 22, and a poetry reading at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 12. 210 N. Second St., Minneapolis; 612-436-1151. **Through May 14** —CAMILLE LEFEVRE

SATURDAY 4/23

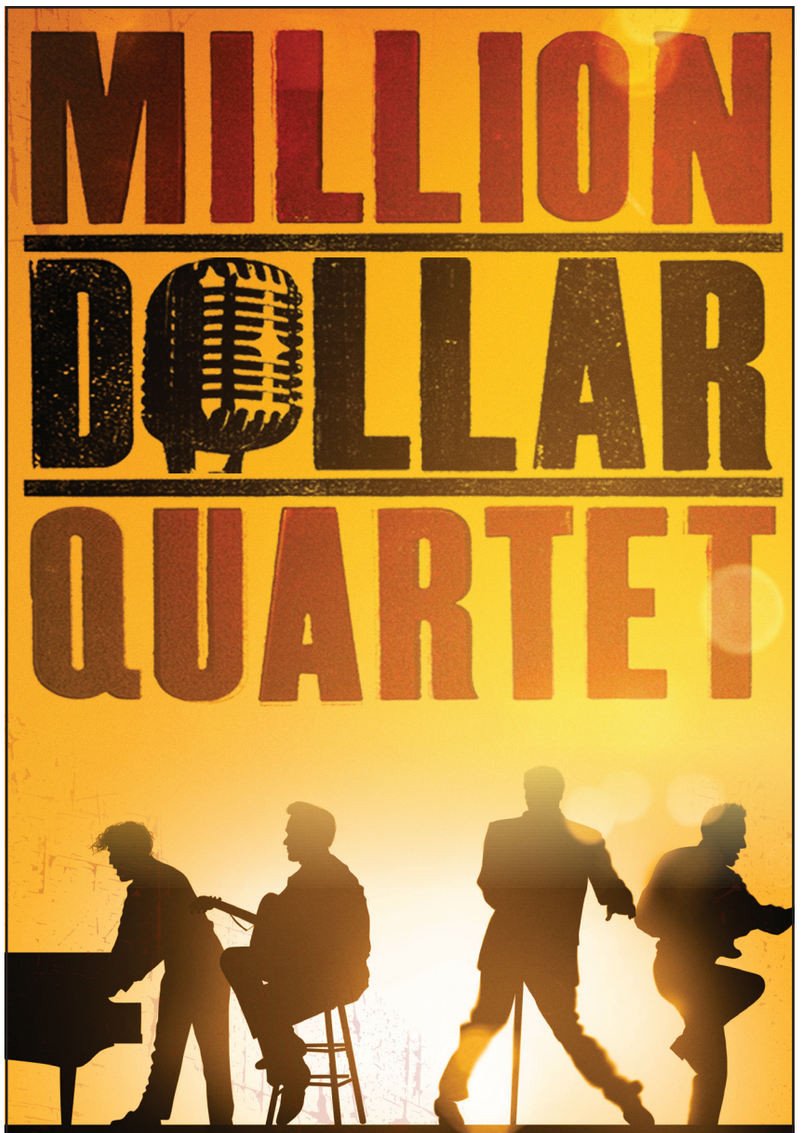
ART/GALLERY

MARK SCHOENING: SHAPE SHIFTER

PUBLIC FUNCTIONARY

This Saturday, Public Functionary opens its fourth season with a new show featuring works by Mark Schoening. For "Shape Shifter," the Minneapolis-based artist explores the world of digital information and how technology impacts his approach to painting through creating objects grounded in reality. That includes

CONTINUED ON PAGE 191 ▸



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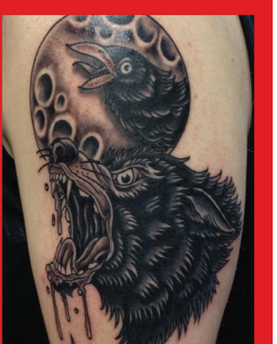

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Apr 26
6pm Social
7pm Concert

The Galactic Cowboy Orchestra

The art-rock band, The Galactic Cowboy Orchestra, has been described as "Bela Fleck meets Rush, goes out to breakfast with John Coltrane and gets home in time to go golfing with Jeff Beck."

May 14
7pm Social
8pm Concert

Spyro Gyra

During their storied career, jazz fusion band Spyro Gyra have performed over five thousand shows, released twenty-nine albums (not counting "Best Of..." compilations), and sold over ten million albums while also achieving one platinum and two gold albums.

May 30
6pm Social
7pm Concert

Davina and the Vagabonds

Davina and the Vagabonds have created a stir on the national blues scene with their high-energy live shows, sharp-dressed professionalism, and stage presence. So much more than just a blues act, their shows are filled with New Orleans charm, Memphis soul swagger, dark theatrical moments that evoke Kurt Weill, and tender gospel passages.

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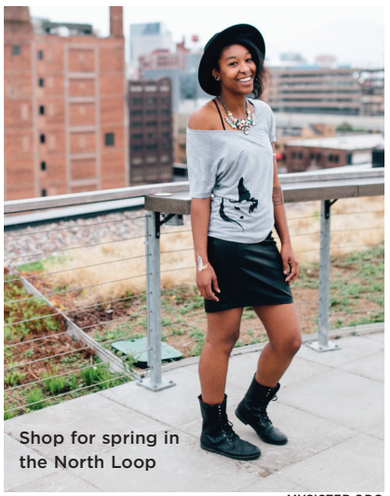

Shop for spring in the North Loop

MYSISTER.ORG

CONTINUED FROM SATURDAY ▸

laser-cut tessellating puzzle pieces, paintings with repeating patterns that overstimulate the eye, and wooden boxes representing stored data. There will be an opening reception from 7 p.m. to midnight Saturday, April 23. 1400 12th Ave. NE, Minneapolis; 612-978-5566. **Through May 22** —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

FESTIVAL

NORTH LOOP SPRING CRAWL

NORTH LOOP

Did Fashion Week MN get you pumped up to do some shopping? This Saturday, the North Loop in downtown Minneapolis is encouraging folks to stroll along Washington Avenue in search of deals and other fun. Pick up a map at any participating store — which includes Roe Wolfe, Dunn Brothers, and Martin Patrick 3 — and get stamped at participating businesses for a chance to win prizes. At various shops and eateries you'll find sales, special giveaways, and other things to check out, plus guests will be treated to free pedicab rides. Free. 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. To find the neighborhood, aim for Washington and Fifth Street North in Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

BIKING

NOTEWORTHY PARKING LOTS OF ST. PAUL

RAINBOW FOODS

Parking lots are typically just a layer of asphalt filled with yellow rectangles. And yet, they can massively stress drivers out, be considered prime real estate, and even host community events, food trucks, and festivals. Last year, Bill Lindeke of TC Sidewalks led the way on a tour of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 192 ▸

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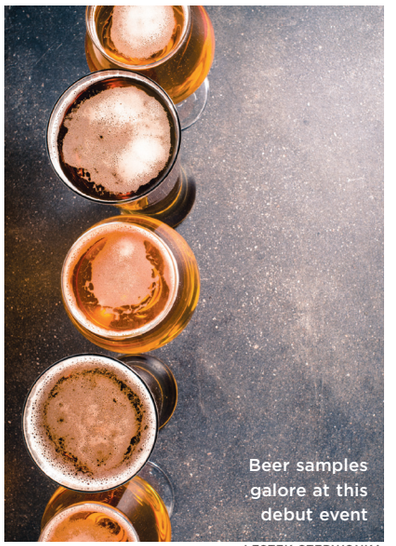
Beer samples galore at this debut event

LESZEK CZERWONKA

CONTINUED FROM SATURDAY ▸

Minneapolis' notable parking lots. This Saturday, he's cruising through St. Paul on a friendly, eight-mile ride to seven concrete jungles with stories to tell. Stops along the way include the University and Snelling lot, which will soon to be consumed by a soccer stadium; the city's oldest two-tiered ramp, found in downtown; a few lots that used to be parks; a crime scene; and a parking lot from the '60s that was then considered groundbreaking. Along the way, other fun facts will be shared (did you know that at one point St. Paul considered tearing down the Landmark Center for parking?). The ride will end at Mancini's Char House. Free. 3 p.m. 1566 University Ave. W., St. Paul. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

BEER

MINNESOTA CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL

MINNEAPOLIS CONVENTION CENTER

This weekend, the Minneapolis Convention Center will be hosting over 80 breweries at the Minnesota Craft Beer Festival. During the day, revelers will be able to sample a mind-boggling 220-plus varieties. That includes Commercial Suicide, a dry ale from Jester King Brewery; Perennial Artisinal Ales' Hopfentea, a unique brew made with fruity tea; the chocolatey Undead Party Crasher from Clown Shoes; and Surly's Todd the Axe Man, a citrusy beer made in collaboration with Denmark's Amager Brewing. Each business will be bringing at least one rare or taproom-only offering, so expect some unusual samples. Live

CONTINUED ON PAGE 195 ▸

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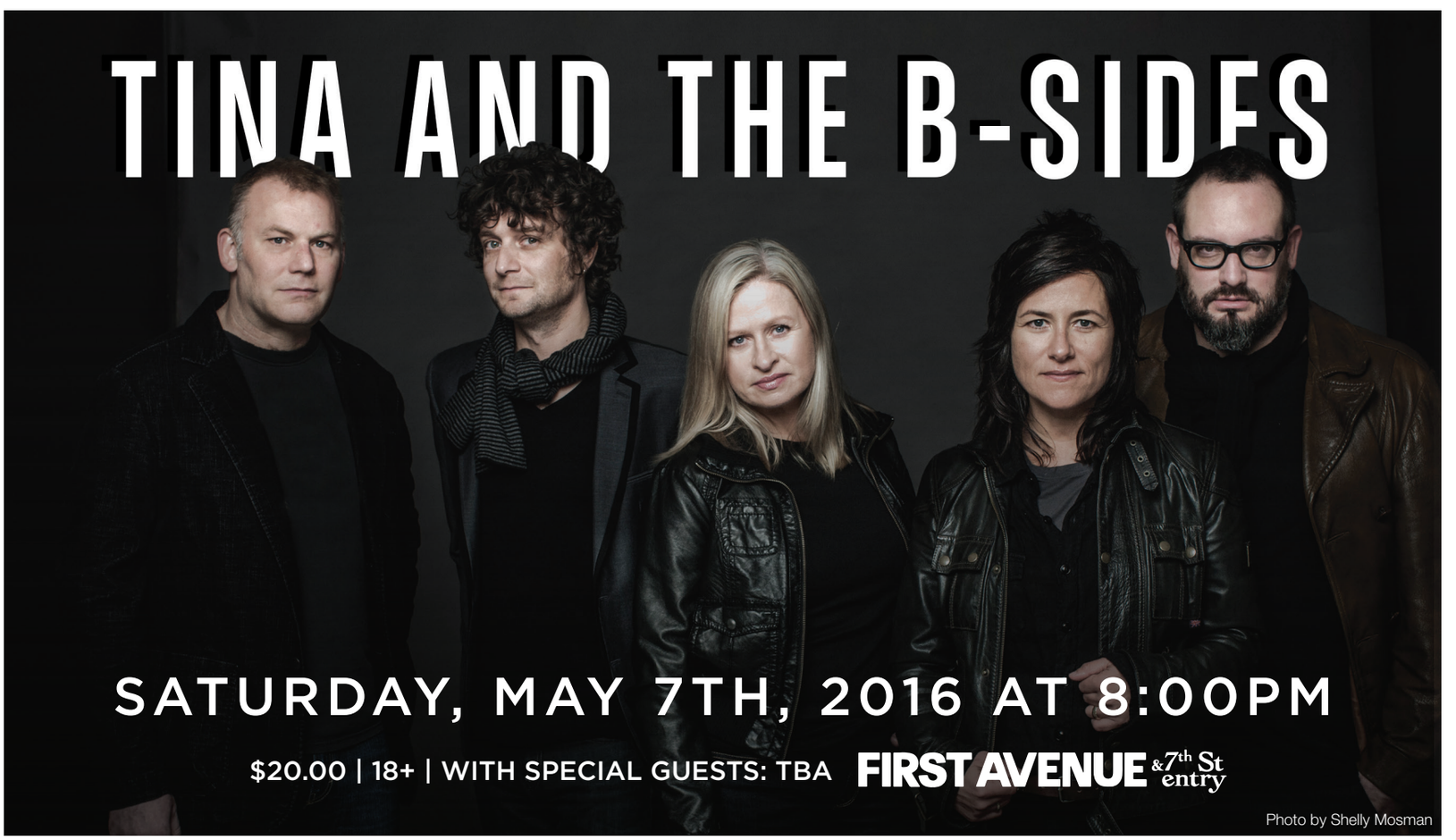

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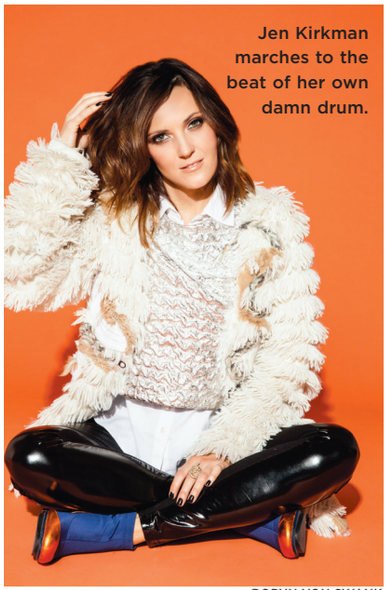

Jen Kirkman marches to the beat of her own damn drum.

ROBYN VON SWANK

CONTINUED FROM SATURDAY ▸

music will be provided by Erik Berry from Trampled by Turtles, and proceeds from the event benefit Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity. For tickets and more, visit www.minnesotacraftbeerfestival.com. $39.99; $19.99 designated driver. 2:30 to 6:30 p.m. 1301 Second Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-335-6000. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

SUNDAY 4/24

COMEDY

JEN KIRKMAN

THE CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER

Jen Kirkman is 41, divorced, child-free, and crushing it. The comedian, whose standup act is deeply personal, is also a bestselling author. The release of her second book, *I Know What I'm Doing and Other Lies I Tell Myself: Dispatches from a Life Under Construction*, is what she's celebrating at the Cedar on Sunday night. As part of the event, the Los Angeles-based Kirkman will share hilarious and cringe-worthy stories, followed by a Q&A and book signing. Marriage, divorce, sex, and mental health are all grist for the mill for the delightfully blunt and whip-smart Kirkman. Whether she's over-analyzing the meaning of a few gray pubic hairs ("Gray is the color of barbed wire. It sends a message: 'Get out of here!'"), justifying her single status ("I'm not against marriage, but I do think married people kind of suck"), or retaliating against the pressure to have children ("I don't go up to pregnant women, six

CONTINUED ON PAGE 197 ▸

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Hmong-Lao Friendship Play returns at St. Kate's.

COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

CONTINUED FROM SUNDAY ▸

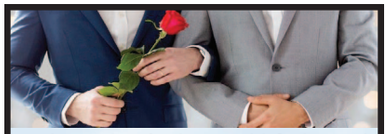
months along, and say, 'You'll change your mind'"), Kirkman reassures readers and audiences that there's no shame in going against the grain. $20-$25. 7 p.m. 416 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-338-2674. —ERICA RIVERA

FESTIVAL

WOMEN'S THEATER FESTIVAL

ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

It's no secret that women playwrights are underrepresented in U.S. theaters. Every year, statistics come out illustrating just how poorly the industry is at fostering female voices. Here in the Twin Cities, the O'Shaughnessy plans to buck that trend with a festival highlighting Minnesotan women playwrights. The Women's Theater Festival, part of the Woman of Substance Festival, features three works. *Women's History Month: The Historical Comedybration* is part sketch comedy, part game show, and features a team of six women writers and performers. May Lee-Yang and Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay will be presenting *Hmong-Lao Friendship Play OR Lao-Hmong Friendship Play*, a piece where the two friends play themselves and share stories from their lives. Allegra J. Lingo's solo work, *The Genealogy of Happenstance*, recounts the author's experiences trying to conceive. For the full Women of Substance lineup, which includes readings, concerts, and potlucks, visit oshag.stkate.edu/WosFest16. $10; $25 for a three-show pass. Noon to 6 p.m. Jeanne D'Arc Auditorium, 2004 Randolph Ave., St. Paul; 651-690-6000. —SHEILA REGAN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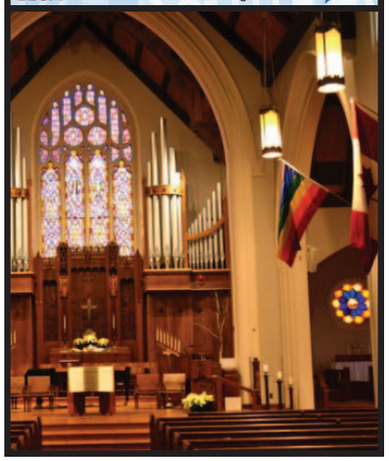

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COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

COURTNEY BARNETT

FIRST AVENUE, TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY 4.26-7

Indie rock's favorite Aussie, Courtney Barnett, should have won the 2016 Grammy for Best New Artist, but she lost to the one-hit wonder who just won't go away — Meghan Trainor. Thankfully, Barnett is making up for her loss by taking over radio waves, selling out mid-sized venues for multiple nights, and winning over thousands with just one official full-length album to her name. *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit*, released in 2015, delves into territory seldom explored in rock music. It's humorous but not obnoxious, carefree but multi-dimensional. Barnett has a knack for storytelling, too, from feeling sneezy on long Australian highway drives ("Dead Fox") to trying to impress a cutie at the gym ("Aqua Profonda!"). She's a treat to witness live, invoking images of Paul McCartney — wide, sunken eyes, steady strumming and bouncing, shaggy brown hair. *18+. Sold out. 7:30 p.m. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388.* **—GRACE BIRNSTENGEL**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20

BERNSTEIN, GOLDINGS, STEWART ORGAN TRIO

DAKOTA

The classically configured all-star organ trio of guitarist Steven Bernstein, Hammond B3 ace Larry Goldings, and drummer Bill Stewart has been an ongoing project for a quarter century. They're all impressively versatile bandleaders in their own rights, and their collective experiences run from Lou Donaldson and Jimmy Cobb to John Scofield, Diana Krall, Maceo Parker, and Elton John. By now the three play together with such natural affinity that the instruments seem to share the same blood vessels, each pumping savory life into the scintillating grooves. Despite sometimes being dubbed the Larry Goldings Trio, the group has an entirely collaborative approach. The result is an exquisitely tasty sound whether heading into swing, bop, or funk. The repertoire is originals mixed with standards, which on their latest recording, 2014's *Ramshackle Serenade*, included "Sweet and Lovely," Jobim's "Luiza," and Horace Silver's serene ballad "Peace." *$20-$35. 7 p.m. 1010 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis; 612-332-5299.* **—RICK MASON**

BIG WILD: With Profresher. 8 p.m., $10. 7th St. Entry, 701 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-338-8388.

BOB SCHNEIDER: 7 p.m., $25-$35. The Cedar Cultural Center, 416 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-338-2674.

BRYN TERFEL AND NATALIA KATYUKOVA: 7:30 p.m., $12-$76. Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, 345 Washington St., St. Paul, 651-224-4222.

COMMUNION: TWIN CITIES: Featuring Jakubi, Walker Lukens, Cyn, and Aidan Knight. 7 p.m., $10-$12. 7th St. Entry, 701 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-338-8388.

FILTER: With Orgy. 16+. 7 p.m., $20-$23. Mill City Nights, 111 N. 5th St., Minneapolis, 612-333-3422.

THE HOOD INTERNET: With ShowYouSuck and Lasers and Fast and Shit. 9 p.m., $15. Turf Club, 1601 University Ave. W., St. Paul, 651-647-0486.

MOD SUN: With Bobby Raps, Rocky Diamonds. All ages. 6 p.m., $22. First Avenue, 701 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-338-8388.

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Davina and the Vagabounds

GARRETT BORN PHOTOGRAPHY

THURSDAY, APRIL 21

BOB MOULD

TURF CLUB, ALSO AT FIRST AVENUE, FRIDAY-SATURDAY 4.22-23

Bob Mould is no fossil, even more than 30 years into a life as Twin Cities rock royalty that began in the '80s when Hüsker Dü reimagined hardcore punk. While his time in the Hüskers and '90s group Sugar continues to influence rockers like Dave Grohl, Mould has worked parallel to his younger followers in recent years, cranking out solo album after solo album. After a period of creative experimentation throughout the 2000s, during which Mould delved into DJing, produced electronic music, and even wrote for World Championship Wrestling, the current San Francisco resident is now in the midst of a hot streak. His last three solo albums form an unofficial trilogy of taut, riff-driven power pop that sometimes revives the thrash of Mould's earlier sounds. Last month's *Patch the Sky* was written over a period of six months in isolation, but even though it's emotionally heavy, it's not without a prevailing energy that seems to lift Mould out of the darkness. Suicide Commandos and Fury Things open the First Avenue shows. You must win tickets to attend the Turf date. *21+, 4 p.m., Turf Club, 1601 University Ave. W., St. Paul, 651-647-0486 & 18+, $25, 8 p.m., First Avenue, 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-338-8388.* —MICHAEL MADDEN

DAVINA AND THE VAGABONDS

DAKOTA, ALSO FRIDAY, & SUNDAY 4.22, & 4.24

Live performance is where Davina Sowers and her Vagabonds really shake their moneymakers. So it's entirely fitting that Davina and the band strut their vintage finery on their new live album, *Nicollet & Tenth*, recorded at the Dakota, which is also where the release will be celebrated with six shows. The album could have easily been situated on Beale or Basin, though, since Davina's sound is inspired by music that seeped out of saloons and brothels a century ago in Memphis and New Orleans. But that's just a starting point, as even her covers stray across decades and genres, ranging from the flapper nugget "Has Anybody Seen My Gal?" to Fats Domino's "Ain't That a Shame" and beyond. Davina's originals slip right in the mix, including the Moocher-like noir tale "Black Cloud" and the rollicking "Lipstick and Chrome." At their most raucous, the Vagabond horns squawk and yowl, the acoustic rhythm section thumps with slippery abandon, and Davina tickles the ivories like a hopped-up Emma Barrett while her voice spouts barroom shouts, blues growls, cartoonish yips, and girl-group hiccups. *$15. 7 p.m. & 9 p.m. 1010 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis; 612-332-5299.* —RICK MASON

BUCKETHEAD: 8:30 p.m., $15-$18. Cabooze, 917 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-338-6425.

COREY TAYLOR: 7 p.m., $26.50-$36.50. First Avenue, 701 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-338-8388.

MINNEPSYCH FEST: Featuring Flavor Crystals, the Cult of Lip, Dead Gurus, Panther Ray, Oaks, American Cream, and Magnetic Ghost. 7 p.m., $6. Turf Club, 1601 University Ave. W., St. Paul, 651-647-0486.

MUMFORD & SONS: With Blake Mills., 7:30 p.m., $40-$60. Xcel Energy Center, 175 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, 651-726-8240.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22

IRIS DEMENT

CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER

When Iowa singer-songwriter Iris DeMent happened upon the poetry of

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MUSIC CRITICS' PICKS

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

DeMent happened upon the poetry of Russian Anna Akhmatova, she immediately felt compelled to set the poems to music on last August's *The Trackless Woods*. Her aim? To better understand the work and provide a cultural connection for her adopted Russian daughter. Akhmatova had a grim life, enduring wars, Stalinist persecution, and the banning of her poetry. But her poems are defiant in their ability to transcend it all, so "marvelous sorrows might endure forever," as she wrote in "Like a White Stone." DeMent's melodies and arrangements have a spare but emotionally rich beauty, her reedy voice quavering but resolute as she ranges among old-time country, gospel, and folk. Her piano and voice dominate a close, parlor-like ambience. In fact, DeMent recorded in her living room with family and friends, including Twin Cities guitar icon Leo Kottke. Things sometimes get more rambunctious, such as "From an Airplane," a rustic honky-tonker, and "Listening to Singing," an Appalachian stomp. Pieta Brown, DeMent's stepdaughter, opens. *All ages. $33-$37.7 p.m. 416 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-338-2674.* —RICK MASON

BOOMBOX: 8 p.m., $20-$22. Skyway Theatre, 711 Hennepin Ave. 2nd floor, Minneapolis, 612-333-6100.

GET CRYPHY: 10 p.m., $8-$12. 7th St. Entry, 701 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-338-8388.

HOLIDAE (ALBUM RELEASE SHOW): Hosted by Manchita and Sophia Eris. 11 p.m., $10-$12. Icehouse, 2528 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis, 612-276-6523.

JOHN DOYLE: 7:30-10:30 p.m., $20. The Celtic Junction, 836 Prior Ave. N., St. Paul, 612-722-7000.

OTEP: With September Mourning, Through Fire, and Doll Skin. 15+. 5 p.m., $20. Cabooze, 917 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-338-6425.

XTC: AN ALL-STAR TRIBUTE: Featuring Adam Levy, Aby Wolf, Leah Ottman, John Muson, and more. 8 p.m., $20. Turf Club, 1601 University Ave. W., St. Paul, 651-647-0486.

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SATURDAY APRIL 23 [$5 COVER]
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MUSIC CRITICS' PICKS

AARON LAVINSKY

SATURDAY, APRIL 23

BRANTLEY GILBERT: With Michael Ray, Canaan Smith. 7 p.m., $34.75-$39.75. Target Center, 600 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-673-0900.

DATSIK: With Ookay, and Drezo. 8 p.m. Skyway Theatre, 711 Hennepin Ave. 2nd floor, Minneapolis, 612-333-6100.

THE DULUTH HOMEGROWN TWIN CITIES INVASION 2016: With the Hobo Nephews of Uncle Frank, the Social Animals, Superior Siren, and Al Church. 8 p.m., $8. Turf Club, 1601 University Ave. W., St. Paul, 651-647-0486.

GENREBEAST: AN ANTI-GENRE RESIDENCY: Gus Watkins presents five different bands (Ghost Army, Deathdance, Patch, Qaanaaq, and ACTN), with record releases from each group. 7-10 p.m., $10-$15. Gamut Gallery, 717 S. 10th St., Minneapolis, 612-367-4327.

GREAT NORTHERN UNION CHORUS: 7 p.m., $20-$40. Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, 345 Washington St., St. Paul, 651-224-4222.

LISSIE: With Skrizzly Adams. 7 p.m., $22.50-$25. The Varsity Theater, 1308 4th St. SE, Minneapolis, 612-604-0222.

PARANOID FLOYD: A TRIBUTE TO PINK FLOYD: 7:30 p.m., $10-$13. Fine Line Music Cafe, 318 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis, 612-338-8100.

SOAP (ALBUM RELEASE SHOW): With Kind Country, and Neon Giant. 8:30 p.m., $10-$12. Cabooze, 917 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-338-6425.

THE SUBWAYS: With Pins. 8 p.m., $16-$18. Triple Rock Social Club, 629 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis, 612-333-7399.

WE ARE THE WILLOWS (ALBUM RELEASE SHOW): With Monica Martin. 11 p.m., $8-$10. Icehouse, 2528 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis, 612-276-6523.

SUNDAY, APRIL 24

SAVAGE IMPERIAL DEATH MARCH TOUR

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joe t cook
9:30pm : amanda standalone, karen townsend and her accordion, venus demars

thu : april 21
9:30pm : MrDr, quiet pioneer, frequency collisions

fri : april 22
7pm : laura and sean's movie and music trivia
10pm : portage, xerxes palomino (album release), the hot estate

sat : april 23
7pm : trivia mafia presents...
331 drinkin' spelling bee
10pm : wailing loons (album release), luke graner, flatwater mississippi

sun : april 24
8pm : trivia mafia

mon : april 25
8pm : the roe family singers
10pm : doug otto and friends

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MONDAY, APRIL 25
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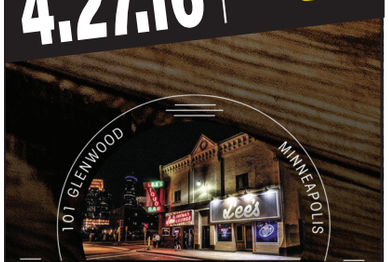

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MATTHEW JAMES-WILSON

they manage to represent a dizzying spectrum of rock's experimental underbelly. U.K. band Napalm Death arguably invented grindcore with their 1987 debut, *Scum*, and their punishingly fast blend of punk and metal has proven monumentally influential. The same could be said for Melvins, the ever-evolving Washington state outfit whose style is nearly impossible to pin down, as they've pioneered everything from doom metal to sludge, stoner rock to drone. Tokyo's Melt-Banana similarly spans the intersections of noise, pop-punk, speed-metal, and electronica, distilling a range of sonic blasts into tightly destructive bursts of energy. A mind-bending display of loud, boundary-pushing music from three legendary groups, this is a night no discerning rock fan should miss. *18+. $25. 7 p.m. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612.332.1775.* —JACK SPENCER

MONDAY, APRIL 25

FRANKIE COSMOS

7TH ST. ENTRY

Barely 22 years old, New York indie-pop songwriter Frankie Cosmos (born Greta Kline) has already released dozens of records via her personal Bandcamp page and various record labels. Through a combination of raw songwriting ability and sheer prolificacy, her recordings, which were lo-fi micro-songs when she first started turning heads, are now sounding more and more like the fine-tuned work of an expert. Her more polished recent material, like 2014's *Zentropy*, 2015's electronic-based *Fit Me In* EP, and this month's *Next Thing* album, retains that initial homespun charm while adding the lively instrumentation of a band that includes Porches' Aaron Maine. *Next Thing* is the most impressive Cosmos record yet, a 15-song, 28-minute contemplation of young adult life that consistently conjures more meaning than its average song length would seem to allow. When Kline's distinct writing voice is paired with the album's catchiest melodies ("Fool," "On the Lips," "Sinister"), her songwriting is revealed to be more exacting and evocative than her hushed nonchalance lets on. With Eskimeaux and Yowler. *18+. $10-$12. 7:30 p.m. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388.* —MICHAEL MADDEN

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SUN. APRIL 24 | 18+ | 8PM | $5
Radio K Presents:
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Emetic/Erotic

I get turned on by puking.

I've been aware of my emetophilia since a very young age and have always kept it private. No need to tell me about the health risks, I'm aware, and I've only ever indulged this kink through videos online. The actual substance doesn't turn me on — I have no desire to be puked on. For me, the fantasy involves being with someone as they begin to feel sick, and then taking care of them as they puke. It has something to do with the buildup and release. Who knows? I'm married, and I told my husband about my kink exactly once, a few years ago. He wasn't judgmental, but he never brought it up again. We have a great sex life otherwise, and I've always assumed I'd have satisfying, normal sex with my husband and masturbate to this kink in private. But recently, on a whim, I posted a message on a kink site. A few weeks later, a guy reached out to say the description exactly mirrored his own kink. We've been texting for a few weeks. He makes me feel like less of a freak, it's been super hot, and we've talked about meeting up and role-playing for each other. It makes me go crazy just to think about this. In light of the health risks — and the fact that I'm married — this would be a one-time thing. Do I have to tell my husband? I don't want to have sex with this person; I just want to live out my fantasy for one night, which doesn't necessarily involve getting naked. But obviously we will both get off, so there's a definite sexual element. My husband and I have had threesomes, so he's not a "strictly monogamous" guy, but it is new for me to strike out on my own. But more than that, I'm mortified at the thought of him knowing about the kind of night I'm having, asking me about it later, etc. I would just rather him not know. But is that cheating?

A LADY EMETOPHILE MEETS HER MATCH

Dan Savage

The answer to your last question — is that cheating? — is obvious. If that wasn't cheating, ALEMHM, or if you thought your husband wouldn't regard it as cheating, you would be asking him for permission to meet up with your vomit buddy. So let's just run with the assumption that getting together with your VB would constitute infidelity, if the low-grade, nonpenetrative, not-for-everyone kind.

So do you have to tell your husband? You could tell your husband — and lots of people will insist you must tell your husband — but I'm sitting here, in this Starbucks on Lex and 78th, wondering if your husband would rather not be told.

You shared your kink with your husband once, and he never brought it up again. We can reasonably assume that your husband isn't interested in discussing, much less indulging, this very particular sexual interest of yours. Another reasonable assumption: Your kink may not be something your husband wants to think about. The awareness of your kink, to use Emily "Dear Prudence Emeritus" Yoffe's phrase, could be a libido killer for him. If your husband worked at stuffing your disclosure down the memory hole, because it interferes with his ability to connect with you sexually, asking permission to spend an evening with your VB could come as an unwelcome reminder.

So you could make — as I've just made — an argument for sparing your husband the reminder, and sparing yourself the discomfort, by not telling and/or asking him, and then discreetly meeting up with your VB just this once. (The counter-argument is also easily made: He never brought it up again because he picked up on your shame, he didn't want to distress you, etc.) But if you decide to meet your VB, ALEMHM, weigh the risks (what happens if you get caught?) against the rewards (scratching this off your list!), meet up with your VB in public first, and let someone know where you are and who you're with on the big night.

mail@savagelove.net

Follow Dan on Twitter: @fakedansavage

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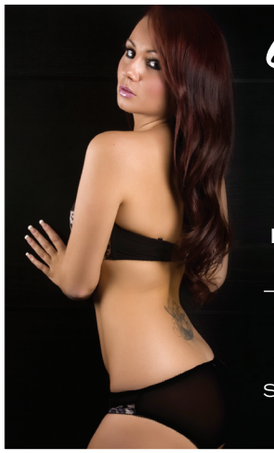
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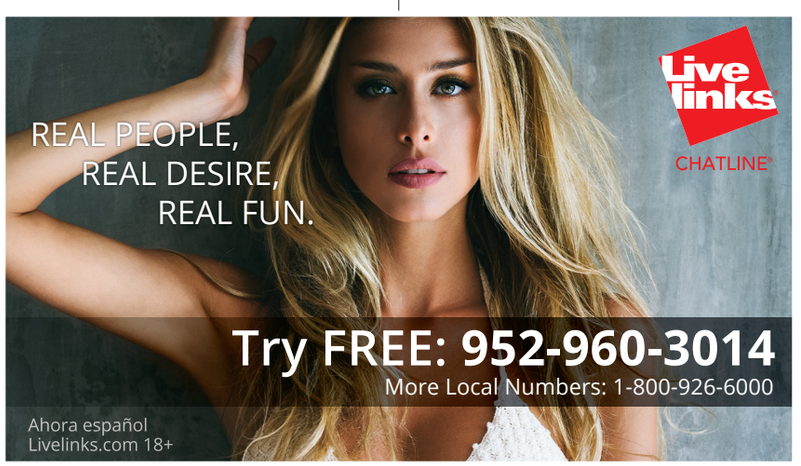

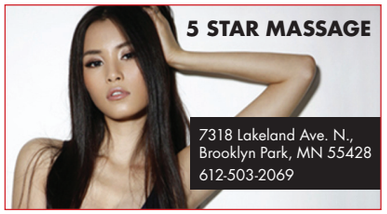

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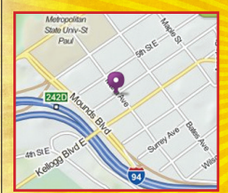

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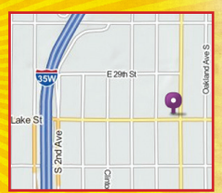

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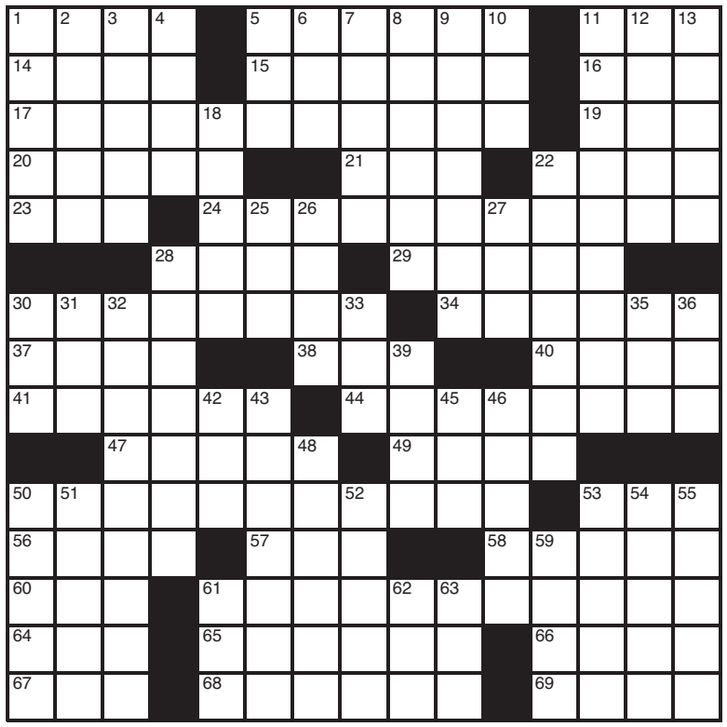

I'M WITH THE BANNED

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

Across

1 Whole piles
5 Decide on
11 Bombay Sapphire
14 "This could be bad"
15 Siesta wrap
16 Mornings
17 Unwanted "One Sweet Day" singer?
19 An American in Paris, only probably with a false name
20 Plug part
21 Came out on top
22 UK machine gun
23 Strong urge
24 Unwanted "Whole Wide World" singer?
28 Cabbage for tacos?
29 Cigar brand whose name means "I love you"
30 Unwanted "Pour Some Sugar on Me" band?
34 Hit that goes all the way to the warning track, maybe
37 Met highlight
38 Ctrl-Alt-___
40 Event with pacing
41 Enthusiastic approval
44 Unwanted "Working For the Weekend" band?
47 Plates for sharing (lots of Spanish this week)
49 Hard to pin down
50 Unwanted "Minnie the Moocher" singer?
53 He gets thanked a lot in post-game interviews
56 Chawbacon
57 Man child?
58 Peak on a church
60 Weapon
61 Unwanted "Laura" big band leader?
64 Big NASCAR sponsor
65 ___-than-thou
66 Melville's "Typee" sequel
67 "___ anybody seen the mayo?"
68 Beginnings
69 Group that grew up under Reagan

Down

1 Fishtank runt
2 Hub built on Chicago's Orchard Field
3 Element #5
4 It's often kicked in soccer
5 ___ Kosh B'Gosh clothes
6 Push-up muscle
7 Fish with a line
8 "Groo-o-o-ovy"
9 (a,b) but not [a,b], e.g., in math class
10 Either "Curious George" creator H.A. or Margaret
11 Fancy place for a beer and a burger
12 Kennedy Library architect
13 Justin Timberlake's boy band
18 See eye to eye (with)
22 Like a Rhine wine
25 It can get you into someone's headspace
26 For all genders
27 Serving of corn
28 Make-believe
30 Box on a time sheet
31 Poetic adverb
32 Daps
33 Sis, bro, or unc, e.g.: Abbr.
35 Soccer star Messi, for short
36 English cathedral town
39 Movie theater name
42 Grp. with an Office of Water division
43 Hairdresser Vidal
45 Common Core org.
46 "Family Ties" mom
48 Seats at the bar
50 Go against
51 Blood line?
52 Actress MacDowell
53 "I want it!"
54 Archer in the sky
55 Cleaning treatment?
59 Genesis genre
61 "Never heard of her"
62 "On the other hand"
63 Triple Crown stat

Last Week's Answer

U	T	N	E	■	M	A	J	S	■	D	E	F	A	T
S	H	E	A	■	A	L	U	I	■	O	P	I	N	E
M	E	A	T	■	N	I	N	A	■	M	A	D	G	E
C	D	R	■	R	O	C	K	M	E	A	■	E	U	S
■	O	R	D	E	R	E	D	■	N	I	E	L	S	■
■	C	H	I	P	S	■	N	I	N	N	Y	■	■	■
S	T	Y	L	O	■	M	A	D	E	■	E	M	I	L
H	O	M	E	T	E	A	■	V	A	N	T	A	G	E
O	R	E	M	■	U	R	G	E	■	T	E	R	N	S
■	■	■	M	E	R	R	Y	■	D	I	S	C	O	■
■	A	M	A	D	O	■	R	E	A	L	T	O	R	■
F	R	O	■	I	S	T	A	N	C	E	■	P	A	W
L	E	N	D	S	■	I	T	A	R	■	C	O	M	E
O	N	T	W	O	■	N	E	M	O	■	C	L	U	E
P	A	Y	I	N	■	A	D	I	N	■	R	O	S	S

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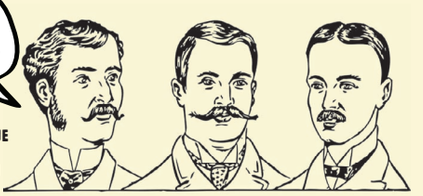

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